

Religious Life Today

The Franciscan

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Pax et bonum.

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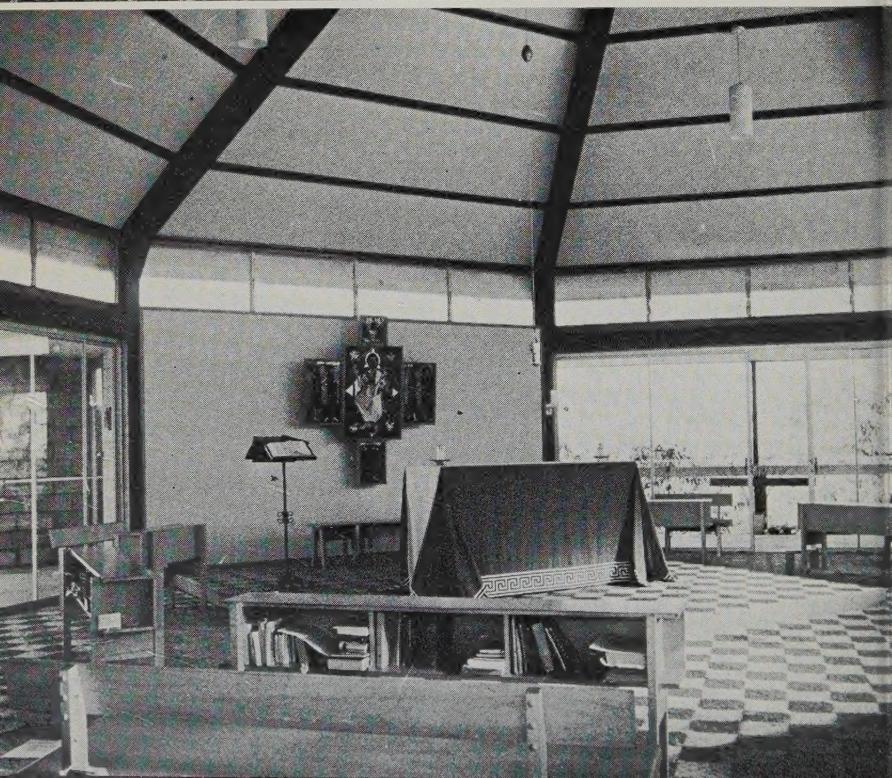
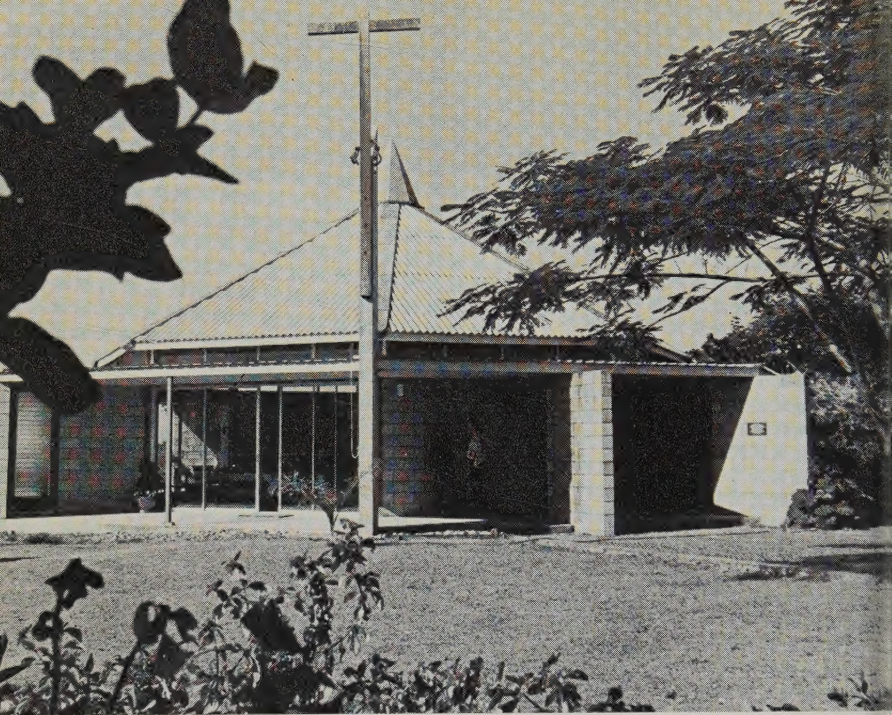
No. 2

May, 1977

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The Chapel at The Friary, Brookfield, Australia, built in 1971



Religious Life Today



VOCATIONS to the religious life are very rarely as pure and simple as is popularly supposed. Nor are they a cover for escapism, as is sometimes maintained by those who do not view the life sympathetically. Such false impressions arise partly from ignorance. A little first-hand acquaintance of a religious house will soon put that right.

But, however mistaken ideas like these may be, people could not hold them if they did not also recognise that the religious life embodies a very high, some would say impossible, ideal. This again is often misunderstood. People immediately think of the negative aspects, the renouncing of possessions and of marriage, and even of the individual will. The traditional threefold vows can never be properly understood, if they are expressed in such negative terms as these.

The vows are there to serve a positive ideal. This is nothing less than the life of dedication to God in accordance with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The teaching of Jesus is notably opposed to ascetical practices and rigid rules. It is a gospel of fulfilment and freedom. It is marked by emphasis on love and compassion and spontaneous joy. To undertake the vows in a spirit of guilt-ridden self-abasement would completely defeat the object. The aim is to be free for God.

False views about the religious life do at least grasp the point that it is concerned with an ideal. That is not true of many walks of life, though, rightly understood, it should be true of all. From this point of view the religious life is a sign to the church and to the world, a sign to the church of Christian dedication, and a sign to the world of the true scale of priorities in the will of God. Its poverty is a sign of the servant status of wealth. Its celibacy is a sign of the consecration of marriage. Its obedience is a sign of the responsibility of freedom. And its members—not many mighty, not many noble, and all somehow compromised in their sense of vocation—are a sign that God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the wise.

The Minister General's Letter

My dear friends,

It strikes me as being strange that on the one hand we increasingly accept that it is legitimate to terminate a young life in a mother's womb through abortion, which is now largely taken as a matter of course, but on the other hand we go to almost any lengths to prevent a person from dying, even when that person may be a great age, and desperately keep the heart beating in what is virtually a dead shell. I recently heard of one lady who prayed daily that she may never die ! There is a conspiracy today never to mention death on any account, or to discuss the possibility of death. Right to the end deception is practiced to convince the dying that they will recover. I am told that some Funeral Parlours make up the corpse to look as though it were still alive, even going to the length of sitting the body in a chair or reclining it on a chaise longue !

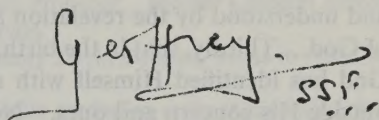
The one thing of which we can be quite sure in this uncertain world is that each of us is going to die, though as Christian faith declines frantic efforts are made to prolong human life indefinitely. But even if our life extends for eighty, or a hundred, or more, years, we will yet die, and this is in keeping with the whole rhythm of nature of which we are a part. In the end deception is hurtful and enslaving, whereas the truth sets us free. I would plead that when our time has come and we are prepared that we may be allowed to die, and that our life should not be prolonged unduly, especially if our continued existence would be a miserable burden to ourselves and our families, and we become virtually cabbages. I am not in favour of euthanasia or of shortening a life simply because a person is old or a nuisance or unwanted. But I would like the right to be allowed to die when my time has clearly come and that no desperate efforts will be made to stave off death at all costs so that I am obliged to exist as a living corpse.

As Christians we must thoroughly believe in death if we are to believe in resurrection, for we cannot have the one without the other. The Bible everywhere takes death seriously. Doctor Alan Richardson in his Commentary on Genesis saw death as a real passing into non-being, and asserts that the Bible knows nothing of an immortal soul that continues to live come what may. Nor does it simply believe in life after death. The Gospel is that God performed the great miracle of raising the dead Jesus from the dead. This means that the future

new world of righteousness and presence of God has already dawned in this one person in the midst of our history of death. As Jurgen Moltmann in 'The Crucified God' says, 'All who hear and believe this move from a distant expectation of an uncertain future to a sure hope in a near future of God which has already dawned in that one person . . . Believers no longer live in this unredeemed world of death. In that one man the future of the new world of life has already gained power over this unredeemed world of death and has condemned it to become a world that passes away'. The future has already begun. Easter faith means that we believe that death signals the passing away of the old state of things, and that God is raising us into the future age of God where there is no death but a new quality of life which is eternal.

How much we need to grasp this wonderful truth, and we shall never do this unless we first realistically face and accept the fact of death. How much we need to help our friends to a like faith. How good it is that there are Christian homes for the dying where people of faith help those who are approaching death to meet this most important moment with calm and joyful expectation, so that from the decay of death they are raised into the glorious future of God, and are able with S. Francis to exclaim, 'Welcome Sister Death'.

Your brother in Christ,



Minister General.

Love

Subtle is the path of love !
 Therein is no asking and no not-asking,
 There one loses oneself at His feet,
 There is one immersed in the joy of the seeking : plunged in the deeps of love as
 the fish in the water.
 The lover is never slow in offering his head for his Lord's service.
 Kabir declares the secret of this love.

KABIR (1440—1518).

Translated by Rabinadrath Tagore.

Chronicle

Brother Michael writes :

EUROPEAN PROVINCE The many controversial issues at present facing the Church of England, and the fears expressed in the declining number of men with a vocation to the priesthood, could disguise signs of hope and expectancy which are also present.

Men and women all over the country are beginning to recognise the false values of a society which seems to depend on mounting unemployment for its existence and an economy based on self-interest, with a morality that appeals primarily to middle class security and a judgement on social sicknesses, rather than the primacy and love of God. Surely it is time for the Church, priests and laity, to give a lead.

What might this mean? Surely, first and foremost, a renewal in Faith : faith in the priority, the power and the majesty of God revealed in His Kingdom and reflected in our lives by prayer and practice. To declare unashamedly the Holiness of God and His love for us, and as a consequence, the sanctity of all mankind. Secondly, renewal in that Faith which has been given us by God, and which we find reflected in our worship and sacraments : administered, preached and taught by an Apostolic Ministry ordained by God ; announced in our Creeds, and understood by the revelation and witness of the Gospel, the Word of God. Thirdly, that in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God has identified Himself with all mankind. No human being lies outside His concern and ours. New life in Jesus Christ commits us to the reconciliation of all men of every race, colour or social distinction. Fourthly, to acknowledge that the conversion of the world to Christ, and the declaration of His Kingdom on earth, must begin by claiming forgiveness for our own lack of faith and love, and our timidity and unreadiness to show our solidarity in witnessing to His sacrificial life.

As Franciscans, we should not be afraid to speak out of a conviction that the Christian community in this country is ready to ' buy up the opportunity ' to renew those Catholic and universal principles which were restored in the last century and have been for so many the foundation of faith and social action. Not just a faith to defend—but a Faith to Proclaim.

So far as our Franciscan family is concerned, we must be thankful for the number of men and women who are asking to test their vocation in all our Provinces. Elsewhere in this issue, we record with gratitude

the novicings and professions which have taken place during the past months. Yet if we are blessed by God, it is only in order that we may be instruments of His peace. Our founders always looked outwards in Love, and, with a certain reckless dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit, accepted the challenge of the age in which they lived. It is no less necessary now.

Clothings and Professions

28 March will be a bumper day at Hilfield with the clothing of eight new novices. Lindsay Pitman, Keith Mitchell, North Kerr, Richard Hodgson, Peter Needham, Stanley Underhill, Roger Friendship and Anthony Matchwick, who will take the names in our Community of Brothers Jude, Crispin, Alistair, Adam, Peter Douglas, Stanley, John Francis and Gregory respectively.

Brother Christopher made his profession in first vows at Hilfield on 26 February before Anselm, the Assistant Minister. Many friends from Saint Francis School, Hooke, attended.

Saint Bene't's, Cambridge, was the scene for the profession in first vows of Brother Ninian. Brother Michael, who was spending the Lent term on a sabbatical at Cambridge, received his vows and Ninian's expanding ministry amongst the students in Cambridge was evident with many of them sharing his joy that day. Ninian moves to Saint Francis House, Cambridge, on a permanent basis after Easter and he will be greatly missed at the Plaistow Friary.

Brother Andrew Philip and Brother Thaddaeus made their profession in life vows before the Bishop Protector on 2 April at Saint Philip's Church, Plaistow. Brother James William and Brother Raphael hope to make their life profession on 16 April in Manchester Cathedral, before the Bishop Protector. Brother Cuthbert expects to make his first profession at the same service.

In Ulster, Brother David Jardine, previously David Douglas, hopes to make his first profession in Belfast on 18 June.

Brother John Derek expects to make his life profession at the Alnmouth Friary on 10 July before our Tertiary Ronald Bowlby, the Bishop of Newcastle, acting under mandate from the Bishop Protector.

Sister Jannafer, at Newcastle-under-Lyme, hopes to make her life profession at Compton Durville on 28 June.

News from the Houses

From Hooke, Brother Anselm writes :

What's new ? The deputy headmaster has been with us now for one term, so he is finding his feet and is stimulating us with new ideas. Sister Jill C.S.F. was also with us as the term's novice—she has already gone away again, leaving us in debt to her for much hard work, and to look forward to her successor next term, Brother Antony. And we have the builders with us once more, so a new building is taking shape in the back yard which will provide us with lavatories and a classroom for science. In a school which should be stable, predictable and safe—as well as creative and exciting—that's enough of the new to be going on with.

At Cambridge, Brother Christian has been awarded a Batchelor of Arts degree from the Open University.

The sisters at Freeland are looking forward to the visit of the Bishop Protector to receive the profession in life vows of Sister Julia on 27 April. Bishop John is also making a few days informal visit to the convent. The Community have been glad to welcome to the guest house groups of First Order novices and postulants, who have given help with decorating, etc. The two Third Order retreats held this year, as well as other guests, seem to have survived and even enjoyed the greater degree of self-help that is being expected from guests, now that there is no oblate resident there.

From Belfast, Brother Kevin writes :

By the time this is printed the brothers in Northern Ireland will be in their new house. Our Friary is being altered for us at present and if the builders keep to their time-table we shall move about the end of April.

The last four years have gone by so very fast—so much has happened and there is so much to be thankful for. First of all, I must give thanks for the wonderful ministry of Norman Paul and Edmund, who along with me built up and consolidated our presence here on the Shankhill. We wish Norman well in the States and know his hard work will be appreciated wherever he goes.

Now a new page in our development opens—it is all very challenging and exciting. Our new home will enable us to have more guests and cater for groups from the Parishes and organisations throughout Belfast and beyond. All that we do has the warm support and backing of our Third Order brothers and sisters and so many offers of assistance have come in to help us get our move over and our future ministry underway.

On 18 June, Brother David Jardine will make his profession—it is good to have a real Northern Ireland man taking such a step—please pray for him. We naturally hope David is the first of many and indeed there are encouraging signs of vocations from Ireland to our First and Third Orders coming along in the future. Nor do we forget that another Belfast man is training in our noviciate.

It is difficult for one not to form political opinions about the situation here. Our real job is to pray and go on praying—to love and go on loving. The brothers here truly try to understand each person's viewpoint. One thing is clear and this keeps being repeated by so many individuals as well as important bodies like the police and chamber of commerce. The government of Westminster is not doing enough to combat the terrorist—if this city was London, Manchester or Glasgow we would surely see a very different approach—here so often lawlessness and murder is seen to pay. Of one thing I am certain, that viewed from a Christian angle, nothing is lost if we link our continued suffering with the suffering of the Jesus who suffered for us all. Do please pray for us—pray for all the wonderful, good and warm-hearted people of this war-torn land—your prayer is our healing.

From Glasshampton, Brother Alban writes :

Brother Simeon, having been steward at Glasshampton since his return from Africa last summer, was accepted by an A.C.C.M. selection conference for ordination training. He has left us for Ashmore Road, where he is functioning as a nurse at a local hospital, and he begins his theological training in September. Meanwhile, back at the house, Brothers Leo Paul and Aelred William are carrying on his good work in the kitchen. Brother Andrew David has been wielding saw, chisel and

paintbrush, both here and, for a few days, at Freeland. Brother Antonio went to Shepherd's Law in January for a retreat, just in time to be snowed in. He and Brother Edgar have both acted as chaplains at Freeland and retreat conductors in the Old Parsonage, recently.

A visit to the Malvern Sisters was returned in February by a visit to the house by the Novice Sister, Verena C.H.N., and her novices and postulants.

Brother Michael conducted a retreat in the House in March, which was the first full-scale retreat here, other than those for the brothers, for some time. We have had a short 'beginners' retreat' for members of a parish near Bridgnorth, and another is expected to take place in April.

From Canterbury, Brother Bernard writes :

It is said that Eve turned to Adam as they left the garden of Eden and said 'Darling, we are living in an age of transition'. It has been a little like that at Harbledown. Terrence has applied to withdraw from the Community and is at present on leave of absence. He has moved from Canterbury to Chatham and expects to go to South Africa before much longer. Colin Wilfred awaits a visa, but expects to be in Long Island by the time you read this. He is, meanwhile, helping out at the Belfast Friary. Sister Frideswide, after applying for exclausturation, is at present on leave of absence from the Community, in London.

All this would bode ill for us here—but it is a case of bad news—good news. Andrew Philip is to be life professed the day after All Fools Day. He is going ahead with interesting youth work and liaison with social workers. Giles has joined us and is a great strength. Terry Cyprian is due after the completion of his time at Glasshampton in April. We are hoping that there will be fulfilment in May of long-held hopes for Greyfriars. This building which the Friars came to in 1274 stands as a link with the past and a sign of hope for the future. We hope that a joint O.F.M.—S.S.F. work party will prepare a permanent exhibition of Franciscanism and that the upstairs room will have a Chapel which we can all use. John-Baptist expects to continue with us in Canterbury and to use Greyfriars especially for his early morning prayers and we hope to have a Eucharist there fairly frequently. The new Dean, Victor de Waal, is a great friend to us and we continue to owe much to Donald Allchin. I have been told that the summer brings great crowds of visitors both to the city and to the Friary; we shall hope to make you very welcome if you call in. One feature of Lent has been a spate of quiet days—eight of them in three weeks—mainly for schoolboys before their confirmation. We have gained much from their keenness and quiet. We are having a pre-dawn Easter Vigil with the Sisters of the Church from Broadstairs, and soon after, Bernard is going to conduct the retreat for the East Grinstead Sisters. We are finding good fellowship with the various communities and there is a day in May when our local region meets here. We miss those who have left us to work elsewhere and are deeply thankful and vividly aware of what they have done to establish this house and open up relationships and contacts. We pray for them moving on and for great blessing on the house and its work, as we move on.

From Warrington, Brother Ronald writes :

Juan Carlos Ortiz said that there are only two languages : the one used in the Kingdom of Light—praise ; and the other used in the Kingdom of Darkness—

complaint. We should therefore be able to distinguish the children of the Kingdom of God. For some years I have been travelling around at weekends—a change from walking round factories—to churches, chapels, schools and house meetings, with a twelve string guitar and a ukelele, to help people to praise God ; and to preach the Good News through songs, choruses and testimonies. Spirit-filled songs are flowing in from all over the world. Christian bookshops can hardly keep pace with the inflow of new Gospel Songbooks, records and cassettes. It is wonderful to see and hear of the great anointing of the Holy Spirit throughout the world, and how Christians from all the Churches are meeting together, especially to praise God. The Spirit is giving them words and melodies : many that are subsequently published are quotations from the Scriptures on which new light is being shed, and the melodies are so simple that they spread like wild fire. Praise the Lord that more than ever before, the prayers of millions of members of the Body of Christ are ascending to Him on wings of praise.

From Compton Durville, Sister Teresa writes :

We have been pleased to welcome Giles at Compton for the best part of two months, and have made full use of him for novice lectures, as well as appreciating his expertise in the garden. Sister Alison will be visiting Australia for a few months from June. This will give her the opportunity to have a holiday at home. Sister Jean has been home for a month, and we have naturally greatly enjoyed having her with us again. It has been good to have first-hand news of California.

The past few months have brought us several interesting lecture courses in the locality. Apart from the regular Bible lectures given by the Vicar of South Petherton, there have been two W.E.A. courses of great local interest, a course on ethics, and Sir Robert Birley has given three superb, illustrated lectures on Art and the Bible. Not bad for the depths of Somerset.

From Newcastle-under-Lyme, Sister Jannafer writes :

Soon after we arrived here in November, people began calling in and we felt ourselves very warmly welcomed. One sows, another reaps—how true this has been for us, following Sister Angela Mary, Sister Barbara and those who have worked here with them since the opening of the house. Spring cleaning revealed a need for re-wiring, which meant two weeks of floorboards up, drilling and lots more dust !

After this was done, we had barely finished cleaning up the mess when the telephone started ringing—enquiries began and continue still, mostly for groups to come and spend some time with us. We had planned some re-arrangement of furniture and use of rooms, and were very pleased when we were offered some more comfortable chairs, for the large sitting room and library. When we came we had wondered what would be God's will for the house, and it certainly looks as if we are to provide a place of quiet, where groups of people of varying numbers can meet to pray, to think and to discuss. While at the same time, there is the continuing request by those who wish to stay with us for periods of private retreat.

Tertiaries and Companions in the area are in touch and it is good that we have this supportive Franciscan group of people near us. With the summer coming

we look forward to arranging both quiet times and social gatherings when we can welcome them to share the house and garden.

Work in the garden has begun in earnest now, for apart from keeping it tidy and attractive for the enjoyment of our guests, there is a need for lots of fruit and vegetables. For us in our first year here, there is the added joy of discovering bulbs and plants in all sorts of unexpected places—not to mention frog spawn in the lower pond !

But first comes the work of prayer, and so the day is built around the times of Office and quiet prayer, and we go forward seeking to discover and trying to respond to God's will.

Hilfield Visitors

During Lent, a series of seminars on spirituality for local clergy was conducted by Bill Lash and Jonathan. The brothers were also glad to welcome Brothers Harold, Bernard and Edward to conduct lectures and share in the life of the Friary. The new Bishop of Sherborne, the Right Reverend John Kirkham, paid an official visitation to the Friary, where he presided at the Eucharist and preached. Afterwards he talked informally with the brothers and had tea with some of the parishioners.

Students from Saint Catherine's College of Education, Liverpool visited for a week with Brother Dominic Christopher. Unfortunately, Dominic had to be rushed to Dorchester Hospital in the middle of the week for an emergency appendicectomy, which was successful, and he is now fully recovered.

On 18 June there will be an extended eucharistic day at the Friary with singing, silence and celebration, to which all are welcome.

Franciscan Families Camp

There are two camps again this year, at Hilfield Friary and at Lesbury near Alnmouth. They are both at the end of July and beginning of August, and it is hoped that the 'water situation' at Hilfield will not be quite so dominant an issue this year as in 1976 !

Alnmouth Anecdotes

The news of Denis is good. He was delighted to receive by the same post one letter which said 'I hear you can hardly write at all' and another saying 'sorry you are so crippled but can still write and remember accurately'. He does in fact not only write regularly, but believes that for the first time in his life, his writing is almost legible.

After a trial run on Good Friday, 1976, the brothers at Alnmouth have had an outdoor Way of the Cross in the garden each Friday in Lent this year. Meanwhile, our Tertiary Muriel Gregory has done a beautiful set of simple stations on slates which are fixed to stones marking the Way of the Cross in the Friary grounds. They were installed for Holy Week this year.

It is becoming more frequent for groups of up to a dozen students to come for a sharing of the Franciscan life. The links with Durham University especially seem stronger than ever.

Communities Consultative Council

Many Friaries and Convents are reporting meetings in their areas with other religious houses. These are as a result of the decision of the Communities Consultative Council to divide the country into areas so as to encourage the Religious in each area to get to know each other. These links have proved most useful, and already day conferences and the sharing of problems of community life and work have meant a real awareness of each others needs and also of how we can help and support one another in prayer.

Chapters

The Christmas Chapter of the Brothers of the First Order in this Province, meeting at Plaistow, was a very important one, since besides electing nine brothers to profession and life profession it also elected all the Guardians of Friaries in the Province for the next three years.

Those asked to serve as Guardian were as follows :

Southern Region

Hilfield—Brother Jonathan ; Cambridge—Brother Barnabas ; Hooke—Brother Anselm ; Glasshampton—Brother Alban ; Plaistow—Brother Michael ; Canterbury—Brother Bernard.

Northern Region

Alnmouth—Brother Derek ; Liverpool—Brother Edgar ; Belfast—Brother Kevin ; Llanrhos—Brother Vincent ; Edinburgh—Brother Malcolm ; Birmingham—Brother Arnold.

The house at Birmingham became a Friary and also becomes a part of the Northern Region.

At the Community of Saint Francis Provincial Chapter, the restructuring of the various roles of ministry meant that a Guardian had to be elected for the Convent at Compton Durville. Sister Teresa, the Novice Guardian, was elected its first Guardian. Mother Elizabeth continues as Mother of the Community as a whole and also of this Province, with Sister Cecilia as Provincial in America.

The Third Order Chapter, in order to give further help to those joining the Order, are producing ten quarterly letters, which cover such subjects as 'The History of the Religious Life', 'Why Retreats' and 'Growing in the Practice of the Presence of God'. The task of helping those joining the Third Order is a growing one and now involves some eighty assistant novice counsellors. There are over a hundred postulants now, fifty women, twenty-five priests and twenty-seven laymen (a postulancy lasts for six months before entering the noviciate, which lasts for two years).

Movements

There have been many moves since the Franciscan was last published. Angelo has returned to Assisi and is living and sharing the life of the Franciscanum. Sister Mary Francis has moved from Hackney Wick after many years and has moved to Falmouth in April. At the age of over eighty, she is still active and was personally invited to accompany Father Stark when he was appointed to All Saints, Falmouth. We hope it will, perhaps, be a semi-retirement !

We hear Sisters Jannafer and Eileen have settled in happily at Newcastle-under-Lyme. A new addition to the Compton family is Sister Leonora, of the Oxford Mission to Calcutta. As she is unable to return to India due to a back injury, she has asked if she can make her home with the Community of Saint Francis, and they are very happy to welcome her. Keith is now an assistant novice guardian at Hilfield and Rufus has a similar ministry at Alnmouth. Richard Alan has now moved to take over the job of secretary to the Industrial Mission in Liverpool from Tobias, who has begun his term at Glasshampton. Others newly arrived there are Peter, Augustine, Jeremy and Aelred William. Samuel goes to the Ashton Friary after Glasshampton, and Oswald to Alnmouth, where he will be Guestmaster.

Brother Francis

Many brothers in the Province have been invited to see the Theatre Roundabout production of 'Brother Francis', as it tours the country. From Alnmouth, a group was invited by the new Provost of Newcastle Cathedral, the Very Reverend Christopher Spafford, and at Hereford, the Glasshampton brothers were invited by the Bishop. In London, some of the Plaistow household attended a performance. As a follow up to the Newcastle production, Brother John Derek mounted an exhibition, entitled 'Anglican Franciscans Today' which proved very successful.

Cri de Coeur

An urgent request has come from Saint Francis Hospital, Katete in Zambia for various medical staff needs. If anyone feels they could offer themselves, or know someone who might be interested in such work, they should contact Mr. James Cairns, M.B., F.R.C.S., at P.O. Box 16, Katete, Zambia. The details are as follows:

Ward Sister

For female medical-surgical (including gynaecological, ophthalmic and orthopaedic) patients, numbering 40—50. Required from the end of June, 1977.

Clinical Instructor

For practical teaching of enrolled nurses in the wards (teaching staff includes a principal tutor and assistant tutor who do some ward teaching).

Charge Nurse of Theatre

For supervision of theatre and anaesthetist for smaller cases. This is a busy post, with 1,500 patients per annum. Routine operating sessions Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The theatre staff includes a staff nurse, two other enrolled nurses and two student nurses.

Saint Francis Hospital is a district hospital with three hundred and fifteen beds, four doctors, and is sponsored by the Anglican Church in Zambia and grant-aided by the Zambian government. Most of the senior staff still have to be ex-patriate since there are not enough Zambians trained to staff the rural hospitals. There is a training school for Zambian enrolled nurses and midwives, and before long facilities will also be available for training male enrolled nurses. It is used as a referral centre for all the smaller hospitals and rural health centres and for TB and surgery in an area in the Eastern Province with a population of over one hundred thousand. The Chaplain, Canon George Hewitt, is a Tertiary and the Medical Superintendent, James Cairns, is a Companion of the Society. Brother Stephen Lambert has been assisting there since 1976 both as an assistant chaplain and doing some planning and maintenance work.

Brother John Charles writes :

PACIFIC PROVINCE At the Chapter of the Pacific Province in September of 1976, the brothers, after very serious consideration, committed themselves as a major priority to care for our Clares at Stroud. This has meant that every Priest-Brother spends two periods of one month each at Stroud which is six hundred miles away from Brisbane, caring for the Sisters as Chaplain and also looking after the small vestigial Anglican Parish there which provides a small stipend—enough to cover our fares to and fro. The Minister goes usually once every two months for a more particular visit. It has been a great joy to see the Sisters settling in after the initial difficulties during the first year and we have been able to acquire another building which is held by Franciscan Trustees for the sisters and which will provide room for growth. The first Aspirant has already arrived and others are thinking of this and we pray that this growth will be blessed by God and continue. Already the Sisters have a significant ministry and place in the life of the Diocese of Newcastle and of the Church in Australia as a whole.

We look forward very much to our Provincial Chapter in April when we will take an extended time to consider, on the basis of an excellent report prepared by Brother Rodney, the placement of Brothers in the Pacific Province as a whole. We are hopeful that we can match the expressed needs of the houses and their hopes and desires with the brothers available to staff them. In some cases this may lead us to consolidate our work for the time being in fewer houses than we have at the moment but it is our real hope that in each place the Society can grow under the guidance of God through local leadership in the countries where we find ourselves into an expression of the Franciscan Life and the spirit of the Society of Saint Francis which is truly indigenous to that place and which, nevertheless, remains aware of, and expressive of, our worldwide family.

At the Friary at Brookfield we have been engaged in rather extensive and expensive repairs under the house with a view to providing a more suitable recreation area and accommodation for our visitors and long-term guests. In this, as in so many other matters, the Diocese of Brisbane and its Property and Finance Board have been extraordinarily generous in maintaining for our use the buildings which they own. But we have to find a considerable sum of money ourselves and this has been difficult in the general inflationary climate of the Australian economy.

When this work is finished it is our hope that all the major jobs of maintenance and repair at the Friary will have been completed and we can turn our attention to other areas of our life.

The Sunday congregation at the Friary has grown and there are now over fifty people who regularly, and for the most part exclusively, worship with us and we have come to see the necessity of maintaining some sort of congregational roll in order that pastoral responsibility for these worshippers may be parcelled out among the brethren. The worship is characterised by dignity and spontaneity. We use a modern liturgy with modern music and with modern ceremonial of a Catholic nature and many people seem to find here what they cannot find elsewhere. In May we will be making a telecast of the mass of Ascension Day, which will later be shown throughout Australia.

At Morris House the faithful work of the team of Brothers continues to contribute very considerably to the growth and development of the young men in our care. This is a demanding and exacting work and it raises for us questions about how long Brothers should stay in this particular ministry and what kinds of Brothers are best suited for it.

We look forward in the near future to the arrival of Brother Henry from America and Brother Simon Peter from Papua New Guinea.

Brother Reginald is helping out at Honiara while Brother Daniel is on leave and whilst there he will be responsible among other things for tutoring Brother Gerard for his theological studies. A number of the Brothers in junior profession are doing the Th.L. Diploma of the Australian College of Theology and the novices at Brookfield are doing the Associate of Theology of the same College. In this way we hope to equip a significant number of unordained brothers for a preaching and teaching ministry.

Brother Joseph David spent a happy time in New Zealand while some of the Brothers there were able to have their holidays and we can rejoice that there are now, in New Zealand, a Novice and a Postulant and we can look forward in due course to the establishment of a noviciate in that Country. The Brothers there have an exacting commitment to the Community as a whole but there is a very Franciscan spirit about the house.

There are signs of growth in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands and the building at Alanguala is well on the way to completion.

The greatest difficulty in Papua New Guinea is the fact that there is a real shortage of expatriate brothers to replace those who for reasons of health or the demands of the Community life have had to leave. But I am hopeful that in the months after Chapter we may be able to resolve some of these problems.

We value highly the prayers of the Franciscan family around the world for us all, as we remember you in our prayers.

During January we had our annual
AMERICAN PROVINCE Chapter and it was very good to have the Minister General with us. It has been some years since Brother Geoffrey attended a Chapter in America. He was able to give us news of the other houses around the world.

At the Chapter, Brother Luke announced that Brother Isaac-Stephen would be going to Trinidad, and Brother John George to our newest house in Yonkers.

On the Feast of the Annunciation we hope to clothe five novices. This is the largest group of new novices that we have had in recent times. It will be good to see more brown habits around.

24 February saw Brother Isaac-Stephen make his Life Profession and at the same service Brother Jason-Robert made his simple profession. The Eucharist was celebrated by Bishop Kilmer Myers in his Cathedral in San Francisco. It was a truly great day.

Brother Henry has left us on route to the Brookfield Friary. We wish him well in his new life and work in Australia. As one of our postulants said 'I sure will miss Henry, he was a real brother to me'. God speed Henry !

At the time of writing we await the arrival of Brothers Norman Paul and Colin Wilfred. They will be a welcome addition to our Province. Norman Paul will be on the West Coast in the California Custody and Colin Wilfred at the friary on Long Island.

The East Coast of the U.S.A. has had the coldest winter in fifty years, while the State of California is in the second year of drought. We ask your prayers for those suffering from the cold and drought. California now reminds us of England last September before the rains came.

Third Order Families' Camp, Alnmouth

IN August, 1976, for the first time a small camp for members of the Third Order and their families took place near the Alnmouth Friary. The site was kindly offered to us by the vicar of Alnmouth and Lesbury and his family. It consisted of the garden of their vicarage at Lesbury with facilities which made camp seem at times the wrong word. Their kindness was all the greater as they were themselves away on holiday at the time and had as usual opened their house to Bill who is paralysed and Nancy who looks after him. Bill and Nancy's holiday was enlivened by the spectacle of a semicircle of assorted tents and caravans on the lawn and a constant ebb and flow of human activity.

We were twenty-nine in number, more than half of us children ranging from toddlers to teenagers, and swelled on many occasions by welcome visits from tertiaries and friends from the locality or passing by on holiday. Though we were sad to be a mile from the Friary, there was much to-ing and fro-ing, and we hope we caused less disturbance to its ordered life in this way. We greatly enjoyed our visits there, and were delighted to have Brother John Derek with us in camp for the whole week. Brother Raymond led most thought-provokingly our bible study each evening on the story of Joseph. One evening, Eucharist was celebrated in a large circle on the lawn as the sun went down. The Lesbury congregation, who had welcomed us at their service on the first Sunday and have since asked for another camp next year, were invited, along with Brother Derek and all the brothers from the Friary, who stayed for camp supper afterwards.

The usual daily pattern began in the church, adjoining the garden, with the Eucharist, at which the scripture would be read and the intercessions made by any of us, including the older children. With breakfast cleared away and the packed lunches prepared, we usually set off on an outing, crowding into as few cars as possible. The cooks for the day according to a rota tried to get back early to prepare our evening meal which was followed somewhat erratically by Compline, singing and Bible Study, the children disappearing to bed at various stages.

Our outings in this lovely and fascinating part of Northumbria with its associations with S. Aidan, S. Cuthbert and S. Oswald, were wonderfully varied and made the week a complete holiday, all else apart. We usually spent part of each day on a sandy beach, and most of us swam most days either in the North Sea, clear blue and invigorating in these northern latitudes even in this long hot summer, or in the equally clear brown Northumbrian rivers. Two days were pilgrimages, one to Holy Island where we visited Marygate House, recently opened for private retreats and holidays, and managed to escape from the crowds to some peace at S. Cuthbert's Island where the Saint would retreat for solitude across the tidal strand, the other to the Farne Islands where besides seeing Grace Darling's lighthouse, various sea-birds and the grey seals, we again followed S. Cuthbert's steps to his Chapel on the Inner Farne. On other days we walked on cliffs and dunes, round castles, over fells to a superb waterfall, and up the Cheviot.

The week was borne along on wings of song, joyous, often spontaneous, with a general theme of renewal, more than once becoming an unintended act of witness. Twenty-nine quiet but devoted voices rendering 'Man shall not live by bread

alone . . . ' as grace before our picnic on a crowded beach on Holy Island had an electrifying effect. On another day in a quiet spot by the River Breamish a discussion on the life of the order was followed by the Tertiary Office. The singing of the Office Hymn attracted a student, temporarily employed as a warden in the National Park, into conversation with us, and we found much in common.

For tertiaries with children, a camp may be a unique opportunity, and a valuable experience for the children too of life in a wider Christian community, as well as a lot of fun. Aspirants and others close to the third order vocation should certainly be invited as they may be helped to a clearer concept of the order and of their own vocation, though for relationships to develop sufficient intimacy it is probably best for camps to remain reasonably small. This also avoids tremendous logistic problems for the organisers. For practical reasons there should in every camp be at least a nucleus of those who have experienced one before, but each camp will undoubtedly develop its particular direction and emphasis led by the Spirit.

BEVIS CUBEY S.S.F.,
Novice, Third Order.

Margaret Scott writes :

' Alnmouth 77 ' (for Tertiaries and their families) is to be held at Lesbury Vicarage from Saturday, 13 August, to Sunday, 21 August, inclusive. It is full already.

Any Tertiaries and friends would be welcome to drop in and see us at any time, especially on Sunday afternoon, 14 August, when we promise to be in camp.

The Hilfield Camp is from 22 July to 1 August. Pamela Hill and Elizabeth Stirling are the organisers.

A Prayer unto Saint Francis: For Brother Quentin O.F.M.

O blessed Francis, mirror of perfection
I would thou mend my mirror of distortion
wherein I see my waking soul untrue
and only sleeping the more approaching thee,
in fee simple of my logic dream
that like entrancing vision cannot seem
but must prophetic be or recollective
of faults I err the most in while I live
my long days of miscreant oblivion
of Jesu's truth that thou didst doing act on.

For both a child and song-full youth thou didst
counter thy sharp father in his midst ;
then as all singing soldiers seeking truth
in bloody vision doffed thy wordly youth,
naked befor thy bishop, world, Our Lord,
to enact thy dream to painful ends Himward.

FRANK LISSAUER.

Chifubu Day

(With posthumous apologies to Father Shirley Cripps)

Hoe shine
Sun shine
Moon shine and
Star shine
Lighting up our faces as we work and eat and sleep.
Hoe shine in the garden as we weed around the mealies,
Sun shine in the dawning as we celebrate the mass,
Moon shine in the evening dancing all the cares away,
Star shine in the dark night as the sleepy hours pass.

Hoe shine
Sun shine
Moon shine and
Star shine
Lighting up our faces with the warmth of God's own love
Hoe shine on the mealies as we gather in the harvest,
Sun shine on the children, they laugh, cry, shout and sing,
Moon shine on the lovers walking hand in hand at dusk,
Star shine in the rainy dark and the pumpkins burgeoning.

Hoe shine
Sun shine
Moon shine and
Star shine
Lighting up Chifubu on a rainy season day,
Hoe shine dimly glimmering ' *Will* the rain hold off today ? '
Sun shine—briefly—as I plodge around the Visiting,
Moon shine in the steamy night, the beerhalls emptying,
Star shine in the sopping dark, the rain is here to stay.

Hoe shine
Sun shine
Moon shine and
Star shine
Lighting up Epiphany, leading us and lighting us upon the narrow Way,
Hoe shine in the springing dawn the pumpkins are enormous !
Sun shine in the market dust, the loaded tables groaning,
Moon shine on a parish ' do '—the chicken supper's lovely,
Star shine on the Magi, they toddle sleepily to bed.

Hoe shine, sun shine, moon shine and star shine, shining just the same on you—
please remember us and pray.

AIDAN S.S.F.

Life Abundant



THE religious life at its best is one in which those who are called to it normally find deep and rich fulfilment. In this it does not differ essentially from any fully committed Christian life. Indeed, the religious life is just one way, to which only a minority of Christians are called, of responding wholeheartedly to Christ's call. Our Lord promised life abundant to those who followed him plus the cross. This life, though it is to be crowned and completed in the life to come, begins in this world. Salvation is a present experience, not simply something which belongs to the unimaginable world that we enter at death. Though the monk does not embrace monastic life in order to have a good time, he does, I believe, when things are right, live a happier life than the general run of people. In spite of much that seems and sometimes is disagreeable, monks and nuns find happiness at a deep level, because the religious life openly recognizes and caters for fundamental human needs which are not widely acknowledged today. If these needs are forgotten, as can happen, then the life becomes to that extent inhuman. The ferment of change that is influencing all religious communities today is concerned to correct what has gone wrong, so that the abundant life which Christ promised to his followers may not be thwarted. Let us look at some of these needs.

First among them is that of a conscious relationship with God of trust, reverence, loyalty and love. An old theological maxim states that all men desire God. Most men, of course, have no idea that God is the true object of their heart's desire. On the contrary, they believe that all would be well with them if they had money or power or personal recognition or friends or domestic happiness. But though each of these goals is good in its proper degree, none of them can give the final peace that the heart craves. 'Lord, thou hast made us for thyself', wrote S. Augustine, 'and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee'. The God man desires to rest in is no distant God. He lives within us in the very centre of our being, where he inspires and fosters what is truest and most genuine in us. To be at one with God means living in accordance with the deepest roots and tendencies of our nature. It means living from our own true centre, living out our own truth ; it means being centred, integrated, a city at unity in itself. This is part of what is meant by the desire to rest in God, the desire for inner unity and peace. But oneness with God means also to be at one with our

fellows. For God dwells in them as he dwells in us and is concerned for them exactly as he is concerned for us. And so the desire for God makes us desire to be at one with other people. To want God does not draw us away from our fellows but towards them, towards loving them wholeheartedly and serving them disinterestedly. Further the longing for God is more than the desire for inner unity and peace, more than the desire for loving relationship with our fellows, though it includes both these desires. For though actively present in us and other people he transcends everything created. The desire for God means a desire for union with an unknown who utterly exceeds the grasp of our minds, whom we can only approach in reverence and worship, in trust and love.

The primary motive for embracing monastic life is the search for conscious union with God ; and this search draws the monk into a triple relationship with God, with other people and with his own true self, a relationship of love. These three relationships are linked and interdependent ; they form a trinity in unity ; if any of them is defective the others will be defective too. Out of this primary object, the search for God, there flow many subsidiary aims, such as the service of God and neighbour through an evangelistic or pastoral ministry, through teaching or nursing. The various ways that monks and nuns have served the needs of others are aspects of and an overflow from the primary aim of seeking union with God ; and the work is better done, other things being equal, the more consciously it is seen as part of the quest for a closer walk with God.

If this fundamental aim of religious life, of drawing near to God and living close to him, is embodied in the structure of a religious community and is acknowledged by the brothers or sisters who belong to it, then the discipline and the restrictions of the monastic life are seen as necessary and to be welcomed. If a person truly wills an end he wills the means to that end. A journey, however tiring or tedious it may be at times, will be fundamentally happy if it is taking us steadily nearer our heart's desire. Religious communities today are scrutinizing their way of life to see how far it does in fact further the object of their existence. They are discovering that some customs that have come down from the past no longer help twentieth century people in their quest for God. The changes that have been introduced or are being experimented with, though they may look like a relaxation of stricter ways, have as their aim not to make life easier but to help the

search for God. In the prayer life of the monastery, for example, the shortening and simplifying of the office and the eucharist and the use of informal kinds of corporate prayer do help the majority, once they are used to it, to make their worship more a communing with God and less a burden to be carried or a duty to be done.

Those who enter a religious community join a school in which they hope to be trained for the godward journey. They are aware of tendencies and attitudes in themselves at variance with their desire for God. They look for help in the total reorientation of their life, in the rooting out of habits inconsistent with their aim and in gaining both the strengths and the point of view needed for the road to God. The discipline which the monk undergoes does not seem harsh nor is it resented so long as it is seen as furthering the way to journey's end. The keen footballer does not resent turning out for team practice, though sometimes no doubt he would prefer to do something else, because he knows that the skill and fitness necessary to win matches cannot be acquired or maintained without regular practice. Just so the monk. The monastic life involves the renunciation of things that are good and right for others. But he believes that he has been called and chosen for something which for him, though not for them, is better. He also knows that nothing worth doing can be accomplished without renunciation of some kind. If a man decides to become a lawyer he has to renounce the possibility of becoming an architect or a doctor. If he decides to emigrate to Australia he has to give up the alternatives of emigrating to Canada or remaining at home. If he marries Mary he has to say good-bye to the possibility of marrying Jane. Every firm commitment involves the giving up of alternatives and the possibility of making a mistake. But to refuse to decide lest the decision be wrong is to make the worst decision of all, and to incur the condemnation of the man in the parable who buried his talent in the ground.

The renunciation of personal property sets the monk free from many cares and enables him to attach himself more singleheartedly to the things of God. Further, having all things in common helps the love of the brotherhood, which is one way of loving God. It facilitates the growth of friendship, for a necessity of real friendship is a certain equality between the friends. Friendship between a rich man and a poor is made difficult by the disparity in their incomes. Indeed great wealth proverbially isolates its owner ; it makes the poor envious and the rich defensive. On the other hand property is not in itself bad.

Indeed it can help its possessor to grow in a sense of responsibility, it can give him some independence of undue social pressures, it can assist him to develop his talents, to express friendship by hospitality and generosity by giving to those in need. It is important that religious communities should recognize these values and find ways by which those who have given up possessions of their own can develop and exercise these human qualities. Especially is it important to foster a spirit of responsibility and the give and take of friendship.

Another great good that the monk renounces is marriage ; but he does not renounce warm affection or intimate friendship. Marriage seals and cements the endeavour to build a deep, loving and exclusive relationship between two individuals. Celibacy can set a person free to form relationships more widely. In the past religious communities have been afraid of close intimacies and friendships lest they become so absorbing and exclusive as to damage community life. This is a mistake which is being rectified today. Being loved by another awakens and deepens our capacity to love spontaneously and generously. Chastity is not the ice-cold virtue that some imagine it to be. Rather it is the consecration of the warm energy of sexuality for the love of God and man, for intimate friendship and for an outgoing love towards all, whether in the community or outside. Intimate friendship is one of the rewards of community life ; it enriches those who enjoy it and enlarges their capacity to love God and their neighbour generously and wholeheartedly. It can thus further the end of religious life, to seek God.

The vow of obedience can be and is meant to be a means to freedom and responsibility in Christian commitment. In the first place it makes for peace and order without which freedom inevitably suffers. The common good of every human association requires some principle of authority, for anarchy is against the interests of all except the violent. The more clearly the monk sees his obedience as a service of his brothers the more gladly and generously he will be able to give it. But obedience can also be a powerful weapon against the inner obstacles to freedom : the fear of failure or ridicule or criticism, for example, or the shrinking from difficulty, danger or discomfort. So long as I can follow my own sweet will I hardly notice how largely my actions are influenced by selfish likes and dislikes, hopes and fears. When I have to follow the directions of another all these become painfully evident. I am brought to myself and thrown upon God. But there are at least two essential

pre-requisites if obedience is to help the growth of humanity : there must be a real spirit of brotherhood in the community ; and those in authority must act as the servants of each and all and understand their primary function as being to promote the growth of freedom and responsibility in those whom they serve.

In this brief article I have described an ideal which is nowhere perfectly realized. But where there is some approximation to the ideal the religious life becomes a deeply satisfying one, in which the monk and the nun learn to discover and live out their own truth, to expand and grow through the love and friendship of their fellows, and to lose and find themselves in a deepening love of and commitment to God.

COWLEY, OXFORD.

CHRISTOPHER BRYANT S.S.J.E.

Renewal

Towards a Restatement of the Theology of the Religious Life



IN the perspective of history, we are still in the immediate post-Vatican II period, when it remains unclear what the full long-term effects of that epoch-making Council may be. Yet, for all the uncertainties to which it may have given rise, there have undoubtedly emerged from it matters of the most fundamental importance for the on-going life of Anglican Religious Communities, both in terms of their way of life, and for their relationship to the Church at large.

Although it can be objected, and with justice, that some of the changes and adaptations which communities have undertaken are superficial and peripheral, there is also much evidence of a serious attempt to grapple with some of the fundamental issues which have limited the effectiveness of Anglican Communities in the past. There is reason to suppose that communities could be on the brink of a major breakthrough, as they seek to articulate afresh their understanding of the nature of their vocation, and their function within the Church. Such a breakthrough might not result in a significant increase in the numbers of those entering communities, but it could, by clarifying some of the issues that still remain in doubt, strengthen the communities' sense of purpose,

and also bring the Church at large to a deeper appreciation of the contribution which Religious Communities might make to its life in the years ahead.

For all the rapid growth in the first hundred years after their first revival, Anglican Religious Communities have experienced an uphill struggle, not so much in the area of recruitment, for here growth was often dramatically rapid, but by reason of prejudice and suspicion from outside, and internal problems arising from theological inconsistencies and unsuitable customs adopted uncritically. Much of the outside prejudice and suspicion has disappeared over the years, both by reason of the greater spirit of tolerance and by the respect that communities have won for themselves, whether as centres of disciplined and prayerful life, or for the work done in parishes, schools, social work, chaplaincies or mission work overseas. The internal problems have also in many cases been resolved. The more outmoded customs adopted uncritically, though understandably, from Roman Catholic sources have largely gone, as has also a certain spirit of inhumanity which was sometimes confused with disciplined ascetic life. More problematic however have been the theological difficulties. It has only needed a certain quality of sanctified common sense to root out bizarre customs and repressive attitudes, but it needs more than this to supply the theological correctives. Without them, not only have false concepts remained unchallenged, but Religious Communities have lacked that solid foundation which is not only essential to their life, but which alone will be the basis of their acceptance by Christians of other traditions in which the Religious Life has been suspect.

* * *

The main theological stumbling block has been the Double Standard, which seemed to place the Religious Life on a higher level than that of Christians living out their lives in secular situations. Such a theological position is now seen to be quite untenable, and it was one of the more important results of the Second Vatican Council that this was made very clear. Anglican Religious have sometimes maintained that this was an error which they avoided when their own communities were founded.* But although in some cases there was a conscious rejection of the idea, not only did some Anglican Communities accept it uncritically, but almost all either adopted customs in which it was implicit, or made constant use of Roman Catholic text books on the

*cf. Sr. Edna Mary, "The Religious Life", Penguin, 1968, p. 126.

Religious Life in which the idea was taken for granted. There can have been few Anglican Communities founded before 1930 which were unaffected by Double Standard theology. Its strength and attraction as a theological idea is that it gives a clear mental picture of the meaning of the life, and a simple rationale of what it is all about. However, as it is now seen to be unsound, it has to be discarded. This is easier said than done, because it has to be replaced if the Religious Life is not to find itself without an adequate theological basis and framework. There has to be a simple yet sound theological foundation, which can be comprehended by Religious themselves, and by the Church at large. Given this, there can be a significant move forwards. We find ourselves, then, in the exciting position of having to articulate afresh the meaning of the Religious Life in the total life of the Church, and its significance in the world of our own day.

Before we go on to consider what this theological basis should be, it is important to be quite clear what the demise of the Double Standard involves. Its rejection as a theological basis of the Religious Life, is not a denial of that high view of Christian life which seeks perfection, with a consequent reduction of all Christian life down to one level. On the contrary, the mistake has been, not of the Religious Life aiming too high, but the development of a concept of Christian life which aimed at something less than the best. The Second Vatican Council made it quite clear that all Christians are called to perfection and holiness. The perfection to which Religious are called is the perfection of love, which is the perfection to which all Christians are called, according to their different vocations. The Religious Life is only one form of response to this call, but it is a highly significant one.

However, if the Religious Life is only one form among many forms of Christian response to the call of God, the question may reasonably be asked, whether the highly distinctive characteristics of the Religious Life can be justified, and if so on what basis. It might be suggested, that such characteristics are only the trappings of that theology of the Religious Life which is now rejected ! Although the vocation to the Religious Life is only one among many that are equally valid and equally worthy of respect, there are, in fact, important reasons for the particular distinctiveness of the dress and manner of life of members of Religious Communities.

The classic expression in Christianity of the essential inter-relatedness of the whole variety of vocation and ministry within the Church, is to

be found in S. Paul's metaphor of the Body, supplemented by the imagery of the Vine as taught by Jesus and recorded in S. John's Gospel. The healthy working of the Body of the Church depends not only upon the healthy functioning of each member, but upon the effective interaction of all the members in a true unity. The malfunctioning of any part must in some measure be detrimental to the life of the whole, although the other parts may in some measure compensate where such malfunctioning does occur. The imagery of the Vine provides a necessary additional dimension by indicating, that the Body cannot function as a self-sufficient unit, drawing strength from the efficient interplay of its constituent parts. On the contrary, the Vine imagery affirms, it is only in as far as each member of the Body is seen also as a branch that draws life from the stock which is Christ, that the source of its strength and vitality is revealed.

The implications of the Body and the Vine metaphors for the understanding of the place of Religious Communities within the Church are far-reaching. Although it is true that the Church has in a variety of times, places and circumstances not had Religious Communities in various of its parts, the fact remains that where the Religious Life does occur it must see itself, and be seen, as having an integral place in the life of the Church, finding its area of distinctive contribution and service, and seeking no other reassurance of the validity of its contribution than to be rooted and founded in Christ. That the Church should be appreciative of the presence of Religious Communities in its midst, is a bonus that Anglican Religious have learnt not to expect, though it is now much more readily accorded.

* * *

But it is one thing to say that Religious Communities are to see themselves as one member within the Body of Christ, and quite another to define their function. The question may be posed two ways. One can either ask what is the contribution of Religious Communities to the life of the Church, or, perhaps more provocatively, what the Church lacks where Religious Communities either have no place, or are failing to fulfil their function adequately.

In answer it may be said, that an important function of Religious Communities, and the one that most particularly justifies their distinctive dress and mode of life, is to give external and formal expression to characteristics of God-centred Christian life which are more usually, and properly, internally experienced and informally expressed. That

is to say, it is an important function of the Religious Life to externalize and formalize essential aspects of Christian life which by their very nature are easily lost sight of, by reason of the Church's necessary immersion in its secular environment.

Nothing that the Religious is and does should be irrelevant to the Church at large, for everything that the Religious is and does should be an affirmation of principles and priorities which the Church knows to be fundamental to its life. This may seem to be a large claim, but it is a necessary one. The Body metaphor requires that we define the Religious Life, not in isolation, but in relation to the Church as a whole. The Religious Life is not of the essence of the Church, but if it realizes only part of its potential, it has a contribution to make to the life of the Church which can be of the greatest value.

The Religious Life retains its distinctive characteristics because it makes its affirmations about Christian life in bold, symbolic terms, and makes its impact upon Christian life by a quality of witness taken to the point of paradox.

All Christians are called to perfection and to holiness, but what does this mean in practice? Here the Religious Life, freed by its very nature from many of the restraints and limitations that Christians in the world have to accept, makes some unambiguous affirmations. In no sense does the Religious Life claim to be the best expression of Christian life: rather it has the arresting, disturbing and demonstrative character of a symbol. The Religious Life affirms that if the Christian would respond to God's call to be perfect and seek holiness of life in his own particular situation, then his life must be characterized by certain qualities.

The Christian's baptismal commitment of total self-giving to God, is given external and formal expression by the Profession and distinctive dress of the Religious.

The Christian's duty of worship as the explicit turning to God in praise, penitence and petition, is given external and formal expression by commitment of the Religious to corporate and personal prayer.

The Christian's spirit of obedience, as the determination always to seek and to fulfil God's will, is externally and formally expressed by the formal vow of Obedience taken by the Religious.

The Christian's commitment to the quality of chastity as the proper expression of a pure love, is given external and formal expression by the celibacy and fraternal love of the Religious.

The Christian's commitment to the Church in its corporate life, expressed in mutual concern and shared responsibility, finds its external and formal expression in the very character of Religious Community.

It may, then, be maintained that the Religious Life involves the living out of qualities that are presented, not so much as an ideal to be imitated, but as a symbol to be seen, reflected upon, and transformed into terms appropriate to the life of each Christian.

The Religious does not make an ideal of celibacy : he urges upon his fellow-Christians a radical God-centred understanding of love. He does not make an ideal of poverty : he urges a sense of dependence upon God, and a freedom from the diminishing effects upon human life of materialism. He does not make an ideal of silence : he makes an affirmation about the preconditions of the quality of awareness of God, which is fundamental to all true religious experience.

* * *

All that the Religious is and does must be seen to have this essentially symbolic quality, and must be not only seen, but understood. In order that it may be understood, two particular temptations must be avoided which are prevalent at the present time.

First, in their adaptation and change, and in giving expression to new theological insights, Religious Communities should be careful not to lose those distinctive characteristics upon which their witness in a large measure depends. If Religious dress and live in a way that is largely indistinguishable from other Christians in the world, useful work may be done, but it may be questioned whether it will be the work that Religious are called to do as their distinctive contribution to the life of the Church. The habit may properly be modified, but it should remain the norm, that the dress of the Religious will be distinctive. The worship of Religious Communities may be revised, but it should be remembered that their worship is not just the private concern of the Community, but a part of the total worshipping life of the Church, and a witness to its primacy. The simplicity of the Communities' life should not just be that proper to any group of Christians, but that of a group who have a symbolic role to fulfil. This is to say, that in determining the form of its life, a Religious Community must not only

consider what is most convenient and appropriate to itself, it must also consider the wider implications of its decisions for the Church at large. It necessarily follows from this, that any decision in respect of life style can never be final and definitive, because both the Community and its ecclesiastical and secular environment are undergoing change which will make adjustments necessary if the Community's structures are to reflect its understanding of itself and its relation to the world.

Secondly, as there is a temptation to adapt in such a way that Religious may become indistinguishable from other Christians, so there is also the opposite temptation to take the view that the form of the Religious Life has been established once and for all, that change must be resisted on principle, and that it is a matter of no importance whether or not it is understood by those outside it. The Double Standard made such a view possible, because with the Religious Life seen as the highest form of Christian life, it was seen to have an intrinsic value unrelated to external factors. But although it remains true that a life of self-giving to God does have an intrinsic value, we must now also accept that such self-giving cannot be seen in isolation, but only as an integral part of the total mission of the Church, whether the Community is 'contemplative' and enclosed, or engaged in an active apostolate in parish, school, hospital or mission. We must affirm that it does matter that Religious Communities should not only understand their relation to the Church at large, but be prepared to adapt themselves, while remaining loyal to their fundamental principles, that they may themselves be understood.

A balance must be found between an arrogant detachment, and a debilitating lack of conviction. The Church, challenged as it is from all sides, and from within, needs the witness which Religious Communities can give to the implications of Christian discipleship and to the qualities of Christian response. Perhaps never before in its history has the Church been in such need of a clear witness in terms of worship, personal self-giving, loving obedience, and the consecration of all aspects of human life. Only such a statement of uncompromising God-centredness will ensure that the Church has a Gospel to preach. Undoubtedly it can present the Gospel without the witness of the Religious Life, but in the Catholic tradition such a witness does exist, and can be utilized.

At a time when Religious Communities are themselves subject to questionings from outside and within, considerable confidence may

properly be derived from the understanding of what Communities can contribute to the life of the Church by a witness that does not require youth or large numbers. The past history of communities can be a real hindrance to present confidence, and to resolve for the future. Vast conventual buildings may seem to point to past glories, but the qualities that really made for greatness in the past were faith, confidence and perseverance, and it is the presence or lack of these that will determine the quality of our contribution in the present and the future. With a sound theological foundation as the basis of their life and work, Religious Communities should feel confident to tackle the practical problems that confront them. That there has been a period of uncertainty is only to be expected because fundamental, searching questions have been asked. The answers may at times have seemed slow in coming, but they are emerging clearly, and they do constitute a solid foundation for the years ahead.

NASHDOM ABBEY,
BURNHAM.

DOM WILFRED WESTON O.S.B.,
Abbot of Nashdom.

The Religious Life as Family



THE questioning spirit of our age has prompted me, as it has so many others in the Church and outside of it, to ask what is it that the Religious Life is a sign of today? To whom is the sign directed?

It is usual amongst ourselves, though it is not always obvious to the world, to see the threefold vows which are common to all Religious families as positive affirmations rather than negative renunciations. In so far as this is understood, it is a valid and pointed sign.

The vow of poverty, largely interpreted today as simplicity, sets us free from the domination of things, allows us to travel light, stands against the destructive acquisitiveness of our age, points to the legitimate use of creatures, and underlines the God-given sanctity of the created order. But, even we Franciscans would not pretend that we are always good at this, or that we are unaffected by the affluence of our Western world. Nor would we want to suggest that this sign directed to the

Church and the world is not often made better by those who are not technically 'religious'. Moreover, we all possess two things which most people in the world never have—a room of our own and freedom from the economic rat-race : these two things are given us to set us free *for* others.

The vow of chastity, the freely-embraced and God-given-and-sustained gift of celibacy, the choice of the unmarried state, and the spiritual espousal to Christ—all of this sets us free, too. By it we are given and accept a freedom from the legitimate responsibilities of marriage and family life in order to be at the disposal of others to a degree which is not possible or desirable if we have the privileges and obligations of family life in the world. In an age dominated by the Adonis of the cigarette advertisements and the Venus of the car advertisements, chastity is a sign that man does not live by sex alone, that sexuality is neither exhausted by nor wholly expressed by and in sexual intercourse, good though that is. Positively, with all the risks involved, we see this vow as a deep expression of charity. We are not shrivelled up old bachelors and spinsters frightened to love. But, again, we are not always good at this, nor is it hard to find in the world those who under more difficult situations are better signs of all this than many who are vowed to it.

Obedience, in an age when still so many exhort us all to do each his own thing, points towards the fact that the next result of such a counsel is not freedom but anarchy, and emphasises the fact that without some structures there can be *no* freedom. Structures define the area within which we are set free. Increasingly for us obedience is consultative and constitutional, never arbitrary and never blind. But even so we are not always good at it, and there are painful and costly obediences in the world which put us to shame.

What makes the difference, what constitutes the sign, what we really have to offer to the world and the church, as I come increasingly to see it, is that these evangelical signs or counsels are by us lived out *in community*.

It is the stability of our common family life which is our most precious heritage and our greatest gift to others. Sadly it is the thing of which religious are still most afraid. Unless we are prepared to make time, to take time, and to waste time for the family life, we end up a group of individuals who find in community (sic !) a convenient way of escaping from reality.

Sometimes when the choir at Brookfield is full and I look around me I am tempted to say ; ' Lord, what have you done to me ? There is hardly anyone here with whom I would have voluntarily chosen to have spent the rest of my life '. Yet this is the family God has given me. It is not a natural family, but it is a spiritual, a supernatural family—and, glory be to God, it works ! Here with the passage of time I have found love and acceptance, room to grow and be free, and the deepest and most meaningful relationships I have ever known in a rich and varied life. Here we are—from nineteen to seventy, from many different origins, with widely different educational, cultural and social backgrounds, and with a fascinating breadth of experience—and we are a family increasingly knit together in love. Only God can make it work. We are an international and multi-racial community and our Society includes both men and women in its Three Orders. Our gifts and talents, our strengths and weaknesses are complementary. As we offer ourselves to one another in love and trust, God uses us all and uses us together to effect his purposes. One of the more extraordinary experiences we all have from time to time is when a guest writes to thank us for the gift of joy and peace that he received in one of our houses, and we know that at that time we were far from being at our best—and we say ' Good Lord, can he really be talking about us ? '. And, yes he was—for God's strength is made perfect in weakness and we are humbled and thankful.

Such a family life can only grow and be maintained with openness and honesty, and with that tactful reserve which respects the inner privacy which is every person's right.

There are, nonetheless, certain things which in our experience at Brookfield have helped us to grow into a family of ever-deepening significance. Not the least of these is the free recognition that some of us relate better to some than to others, and that it is out of these real relationships of love and friendship and trust, in which we are able to reveal ourselves and find acceptance ' warts and all ', that the possibility of a wider love for all develops. You can't love everyone unless you first love someone. Some of our happiest days have been simple picnics in a park not far from the Friary where we have gone together and yet within sight and sound of one another done ' our own thing ' without any pressures to conform to a false heartiness. Some have walked, others swum, some have read and others slept or talked.

And at the end we have all felt that it was good to be there and we were truly one together.

Shared Bible study has been a great help to us, especially when we have been concerned not to be scholarly or critical (these approaches, of course, have their proper place), but when we have after silence and prayer reflected together on the Word of God and tried to say what the Scriptures are saying to *us*, to this particular group of friars *now*. Equally valuable have been the discussion groups for the Professed where we have reflected on our life together and have tried to see what we are about, what is happening to our life, and what we should be about. We have learned to be frank, without often being nasty or cruel.

Opportunities for shared prayer and conversation are vital to the development of the family life. Just as a man needs to keep his friendships in good repair, so family life has to be worked at. It doesn't just happen. If we are all too busy to spend time together it will fade away.

For each of us there are three areas of life with which we must come to terms if we are to grow and mature as persons, and as Christians and as religious. There must be an honest and realistic acceptance of myself as I am ; which does not mean approval and never complete approval. This issues in that proper self-regard, that proper self-love, without which relationship with others and God is impossible, for unless that is there I will not offer a real person to the other. Novice formation and the family life (which is the greatest single factor in that formation) must be such as to make this journey to maturity, integrity and wholeness possible. For it is these three things with which the Christian life and holiness are concerned.

There must, equally, be the acceptance in love of the others. They do not exist to conform to my patterns, to prop up my insecurities. I must meet them with the love that sets them free and thus leaves them room to grow. In the process I discover more of them and myself and above all enter into the mystery of Christ the Lord 'in the midst'. True family life creates and fosters this possibility.

On the basis of these nearer realities, and only on that basis for most of us, can we go out in faith and hope to relate to the mystery of the cosmos and to the wonder of God. The journey inwards of self discovery leads me to God who is there within, already working for

my perfection. The journey towards my brother, in which hospitality replaces hostility, leads me to the discovery of God in the mystery of the Vine and the branches. The God whom I know and recognize in these two areas is the same Lord who gives me intimations of himself in the wider mystery of all life and creation. And the good family life by the quality of its prayer and worship and in its corporate silence creates the atmosphere, the conditions, within which that vital encounter can be made. And as it does so it recognizes that each must find his own way to the Throne of the Most High God.

It is this family life which is our greatest gift and sign to the Church and the world. Of course, we fail ; and often miserably. But it *is* possible and it *is* what the world hungers for. And the wonder of it all is that God uses us and our weaknesses—and the glory is all his.

I rejoice that God has set me in this family of S.S.F. and in the wider family of the Religious Life. Recently I met a Brother whom I had met but once before. The occasion of a slightly longer encounter was an opportunity for each of us to discover how much we had in common, to share our hopes and fears, our joys and sorrows. It may be a long time before we meet again. But a bond has been established, a lot given and received, and a fellowship of prayer and the spirit established which has nothing to do with time or space. That is a real dimension of family life and it is an enrichment which in the end is shared by all because each is more himself for having met and given of himself to the other, for having listened, accepted, and been silent.

BROOKFIELD,
QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA.

JOHN CHARLES S.S.F.,
Minister Provincial.

‘Ways of the Spirit’

Addresses given during the Congress on Spirituality, London, 1975, by Bishop Huddleston, Kathleen Raine, Ken Leech and others. Subjects include the spirituality of Thomas Merton, Dag Hammersjold and Simone Weil.

Obtainable at 30p (plus 10p postage) from the London Ecumenical Centre, 35 Jermyn Street, London, SW1Y 6DT.

Hermits Today

The Revival of the Eremitical Life in the Anglican Church in the Twentieth Century



I. *Historical Background*

IN this century, coinciding with the catastrophic years which began with the first World War, we find a few men and women—lay and religious—called to the eremitical life in England and Wales. They were under the protection or guidance of religious communities or priests : to name but one, there was Sister Adeline Cashmore who, in the words of her director, Father William of Glasshampton, himself a solitary by force of circumstances, was ‘ on fire with the love of God and one of the merriest people I know ’.

At the present time there is a revival of interest in the eremitical way of life, partly because of the strain of modern society and partly because of the reassessment of the religious life after Vatican II. Since that time many have desired to return to the asceticism of silence, to the positive creative use of silence, and to explore the deeper levels of prayer. Some of these, lay and religious, want to enter contemplative communities, others to have ‘ houses of prayer ’ within communities, but some have a genuine desire to rediscover the secret of the Desert, which is givenness to God in the depth of metanoia* and purity of heart. This involves conflict.

We all recognise today that the Constantine phase of christian history has come to an end. It has broken up under the pressure of new and vital forces. The christians who see this most clearly are those who now bear the burden and heat of the working day. They feel a closer affinity with the early Church than with medieval Christendom or with the Age of Reason. ‘ This ’, says the historian Jean Daniélou, ‘ furnishes the complete explanation of something else, a development which I take to be peculiarly characteristic of our own time, namely the re-entry of contemplatives into the active life of the world.

‘ For in the early days of christianity, the holy virgins and the men of prayer lived their daily lives as part of the one christian community in full contact with the world of paganism. The flight into the desert was a revolutionary innovation, dating

* The turning of the soul from all worldly attractions to the love of God ; also called conversion of manners, or repentance.

from the fourth century when S. Antony inaugurated the age of monks, the withdrawal of contemplatives from a world in which christianity was compromised into the solitudes where they might keep alive the faith of the martyrs'. (Daniélou : *The Lord of History*, Chap. 5).

Now S. Antony is coming back from his desert : there is no need for flight, for the Church must once again be an army of martyrs in the midst of a heathen society. 'My factory is my desert'. In this soulless age the desert can be found in the utter aloneness of the city, in a single room in a high-rise block of flats in an industrial area, and people will come to those living under such conditions if they are making a valid witness and can truly say they seek to know God.

II. *The Call to the Solitary Life*

Granted that the initial impetus to live the solitary life may be deliberately chosen and permission sought as part of a personal quest yet, if the vocation is a genuine one, this personal search—not only the search for God, though it is always that—this search must develop into a quest that brings us to a place where we are exposed to a deep heart-searching, a listening awareness of the fundamental crying need of the world. This is the monk's or nun's chief service to mankind at all times and is to be most experienced by the solitary.

In aloneness we learn to share in a basic way in the emptiness and lostness that modern man often knows but also tries to block out and ignore. The solitary, though he may spend much time alone, is *never* alone in the sense of being alienated from humanity, unaware of its sorrows and agonies and unmindful of his responsibilities to bring persons, known and unknown, to the mercy of God through prayer. As 'watchmen upon the walls', the solitaires are at the point where the forces of evil and the redemptive power of God meet. This means that the solitary must be a still centre who does not react to others' reactions.

The eremitical vocation, therefore, as those not personally called by God to such a way sometimes imagine, cannot be the desire to seek one's own salvation nor to contract out of the spread of the gospel of the Body of Christ. On the contrary, the vocation lies at the very centre of the heart of the Church for, as the Vatican II 'Constitution on Liturgy' decrees, 'It belongs to the Church to be both human and divine, visible yet rich in invisible realities, fervent in spirit yet fully

contemplative, present in this world and yet a stranger to it ; but in such a way that that which is to her in any way human, is submitted to what is divine '.

The function of the charisma of the solitary life is to express openly this interior aspect of the mystery of the Church which is its intimate and personal relationship with Christ, a sharing in his passion and his glory. In the heart of the Church, therefore, the life of the hermit is exposed to the Spirit by whose power the fulness of his gifts are made fruitful for all mankind. In the measure that he allows the Spirit free intercourse in himself, the ascetic is enabled to intercede for his brothers to whom he already manifests on earth the presence of the kingdom of God.

For the solitary, the words of S. Antony, the father of hermits, become a living reality : ' My life is with my neighbour '. So the solitary is in the forefront of the fray with no other arms than prayer and penitence. Although alone, he is one with all his brothers who hasten the coming of the kingdom. He is, according to Evagrius, separated from all and united to all.

III. *Training for the Solitary Life*

In some of the Anglican communities today there are those who are seeking ways and means to express both the corporate and the individual desire for greater solitude and silence, more prayer and a deeper participation in Christ's ministry of reconciliation. Perhaps this is the place to quote some words of Peter Anson :—

' There are always likely to be some men and women who feel that " material solitude " is essential for their spiritual life. They can no more do without it than without food or drink, and if they are deprived of this isolation their lives become spoilt, cramped, distorted and they never find their true vocations. The " born solitary " is drawn to the eremitical life for various reasons, partly natural, partly supernatural '. (*The Call of the Desert*, S.P.C.K., p. 212).

On the other hand as an experienced Benedictine Abbot has said, only twenty-five per cent of would-be hermits are likely to be genuine, but we must give an opportunity to the other seventy-five per cent who believe themselves called to the solitary life ' to test the spirits whether they be of God '.

Though it would seem to be generally true that the cenobium (monastery) should be the training ground for the solitary, it seems equally true that even if *metanoia* and the life of stability has not been firmly established, there are those who need to separate themselves from their fellow men in order that their latent powers of spirituality may have room for expansion and growth. This was deeply felt by Father Derwas Chitty as being an expression of the uniqueness of each personality whom God was re-creating in the Spirit. As he himself said, 'Be careful not to cramp the spirit : because a religious is difficult in the cenobium it does not necessarily mean he is not ready for the solitary life. Only God can judge that '.

Thomas Merton reminds us in his thesis 'The Spiritual Father in the Desert Tradition' (February, 1966), 'The solitary should with the blessing of the head of the monastery be free to choose his own spiritual Father (Mother), but he will only deceive himself if, in making the choice, he seeks out a Master who will never tell him anything except what he wants to hear, and never commands him anything against his will '.

It is obviously essential that the spiritual Father should have wise discernment and flexibility of mind to see God's will for the solitary at every stage of his response to God's call, and be like the Desert Fathers of old in their respect for the variety of personal vocations and 'ways'. 'They did not seek to impose hard and fast rules, reducing all to an arbitrary uniformity. Far from seeking security in a kind of service conformity, they were able to appreciate the diversity of gifts which manifested the one Spirit' (ibid). The function of the spiritual Father must always be to encourage and guide the solitary more effectively to respond to the divine call. The art of direction is never to dictate but to see Christ going before the soul and to encourage each individual to respond with courage and generosity.

When the training of the solitary is under consideration, it is important to emphasise that the foundations of ascetic discipline will usually have been laid in the faithful observance of life and prayer in the cenobium. The early Desert Fathers showed that the solitary life, except in the case of a special call from God, was fraught with danger unless there was sufficient preparatory training, for 'if the mind desires to mount the cross before the senses have ceased from their sickness, the wrath of God comes upon it because it has entered upon a measure beyond its capacity' (Abbot Isaias).

While obedience to the Spirit is the aim of the solitary and must be formed and built up through his previous experience in the cenobium and through consultation with and obedience to others, to the tradition and to the spiritual Father, yet obedience must not be seen as an end in itself but as a disposition of the will leading to that conformity with the will of God which is perfect freedom.

While there must be obedience on the one hand, there is need for penitence on the other and for the growing realisation of the solitary's own sinfulness. It is the call to satisfy the urge and thirst for God which will evoke the shedding of tears of deeper compunction of heart. There must be first of all the deeper solitude for repentance both for one's own sin and for cosmic sin, but the understanding of the meaning of sin arises out of the desire and thirst for God.

IV. *The Practice of the Solitary Life*

General

The early God-seekers of the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries lived many years in silence, wrestling with themselves as much as with God. They followed no written Rules—there were none. They recited psalmody by heart and their hearts were expanded by the interpretation of Holy Scripture as given to them by the staretz (spiritual Father) and by the tradition. They formulated no philosophy of life in those early days and they certainly had no blue-print for an emerging embryonic state of monasticism.

The same applies to our modern hermits. We cannot hand them a blue-print of an exact timetable by which their way of prayer and the extent of the external activities they should undertake should be carried out. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit each must find out what is the way for him, but at least we have the example of those early warriors for God as they lived a life of intense discipleship. They gave us a pattern of their experience which today is gathered into the *Apophthegmata Patrum*—the Sayings of the Fathers—and worth special mention are the works of Cassian. Some of these sayings are prophetic, some obscure, some hortatory, some consolatory, some very severe, others very compassionate, but, as Archimandrite Barnabas pointed out in an article on the Solitary Life, the personality of the speaker comes through in nearly every case, proving that the severe mode of life did not by any means destroy the nature of the person living it but, rather, transformed and transfigured him.

What then is the aim of the solitary ? The solitary, having attained a certain degree of stability and having begun to know what silence is, may expect to be drawn deeper into the spiritual conflict for it has been well said that the very setting up of a hermitage invites the close attention of the powers of good and evil who fight out their contest in the heart of the solitary. It is a fearful thing to fall *alone* into the hands of the living God. The solitary is plagued with memories and may be tempted to identify prayer with day-dreaming and, as the novelty dies away, he may suffer from ennui and boredom. Then comes the temptation of '*Cui bono ?*'—does God really care?—and as the purgative process continues the would-be solitary must pass through successive waves of temptation : those that involve faith, that attack hope, that could bemuse and corrupt love, as well as those that arouse all kinds of sexual and other forms of mental phantasies and images.

The conflict for the solitary will be to complete and to preserve peace in the self. There will be assaults on the integrity of his response to personal unification, assaults from all that is as yet unreconciled in his own unconscious, as well as from external pressures or from the assaults of evil, but the solitary must renew his faith in God and his will to possess and be possessed by God.

Only humility can give him that peace. Only in the strength of Christ's humility can the solitary sustain 'the dreadful searching of soul that strips him of his vanities and self-deceptions and can peacefully accept the fact that when his false ideas of himself are gone he has practically nothing else left. But then he is ready for the encounter with reality ; the Truth and Holiness of God, which he must learn to confront in the depths of his own nothingness'. (Thomas Merton : *The Silent Life*).

It is through the perfection of his redirection of life that the solitary is made a peacemaker and can stand inviolate as a true icon of Christ's victory in the conflict with evil.

The Timetable

The timetable of the solitary is a personal individual thing, flexible yet under obedience to the spiritual Father. It will vary according to the spiritual maturity of each and, on a very practical level, vary often according to the season of the year, especially with regard to the rhythm of sleep and night prayer.

The actual day will be divided into prayer and what may be termed prayerful activity :—

Prayer

The eucharist will generally not be of daily necessity. Practically speaking it may be an impossibility and as Thomas Merton says :—

‘ Here before the altar, where the community gathers for the eucharistic banquet, we know that the solitaries of the desert are also present. This is their Mass as well as ours . . . we remember finally that the whole body of monasticism past, present and to come is there in a special way and that the entire Church is present for it is her sacrifice ’. (*The Silent Life*).

It follows also that since the Office flows from the eucharist, there will be great variety as to how the Office should be recited or offered. One solitary may recite out loud, verse by verse, the whole Office by day and by night with all the appropriate bodily actions as if in Choir. To another the Office may become gradually more interiorised, so that the words of scripture and of psalmody are embodied by the Jesus Prayer or some other form of rhythmic prayer.

The prayer of the night will probably become increasingly meaningful and of necessity for most solitaries.

Prayerful Activity

‘ The whole being of the hermit must partake in the total offering to God and for mankind. Therefore, apart from the time of actual prayer, there must be a degree of exterior activity such as manual labour, housework, gardening, making of icons, weaving, translating ; in fact any kind of work consistent with solitude and which does not involve the breaking of the creative silence which is indispensable to his spiritual growth ’. (Archimandrite Barnabas).

The more experienced solitary may, in this context, well have some form of apostolate by correspondence or by giving spiritual counsel. As his life becomes increasingly purified, his passions stilled and his will more constantly attuned to the will of God, the hermit will be increasingly sensitive as to when charity should call him to break his silence and solitude. This involvement on the physical level will most likely be balanced by longer periods of more complete withdrawal as, for example, in Advent and Lent or when through his prayer he is

drawn more deeply into the cosmic battle of the world's suffering and participates in the victory of our Lord's reconciliation against the powers of darkness. Sister Adeline, whom we mentioned above, when her spiritual Father commented on her fatigue said, 'Yes, I am very weary but I have been drawn into the fringe of one of the Lord's battles and his victory'. It is these times which will also largely determine how frequently the hermit will wish to attend the eucharist.

V. *Conclusion*

Life in community produces the few who are called to more solitude and guards and protects them. They are not always solitary except in spirit, for the world presses in on the solitary after he has been tested. The greatest solitaries are not only closest, most in coinherence with the world in their inner life, but also the most sought after for counsel and help.

It is to those who have the greatest sense of and pull towards the solitary life that the call to service and contact with the world is most usually made. They have to keep the desert in their heart and, because it is there, they will be enabled to serve the more completely to be peace, 'to bring in peace, to put love in where love is not'. (S. John of the Cross).

The hermit's way may be unintelligible to those not called to that life, and often part of the loneliness of the hermit is that by the very nature of his calling, which is to greater spiritual knowledge in depth, he cannot share with or explain to others the mystery of God's operations which are being revealed to him. This is the true loneliness of the desert and likewise the raw material of the spiritual warfare.

To sum up, the solitaries are the servants of the Church as the Church is the servant of the world. To them as to the Church is given the Word of reconciliation and the ministry of reconciliation. They stand at the point of tension where the love of God and evil meet, to bear witness to stability in Christ.

The solitary in his prayer is the most complete example of the coinherence of all mankind. Physically alone, isolated generally speaking from the centres where the majority of mankind lives out its human existence, he is at the heart of human experience, suffering and relationship everywhere. Of the mode of his prayer it is impossible to speak for each in the degree of his openness to the Spirit's guiding will

be drawn into Christ's reconciliation of all mankind. What it is necessary to say is that whatever the rhythm of prayer may be by day and by night, the solitary must never lose sight of the face of Jesus as Saviour and that it is he and only he who draws us to the Father and has promised us the ministry of the Holy Spirit. S. John of the Cross explicitly says that we must never lose sight of the incarnation and all that flows from it ; that is the uniqueness and completion of the christian way.

In humility of spirit, the solitary knows that Divine Love waits for him in an abyss which as the years go on reveals ever greater depths. He knows that his ordinary normal awareness is only part of a larger dimension, above, around, beneath his conscious being. It is an invitation to a battlefield, to new conflict. Seeing (vision) and worshipping is his work of reconciliation by which the world may draw water out of the wells of salvation. The conflict is at that point where vision clashed with the powers of evil. The way is not a kneeling before God with folded hands of supplication, but it is a going *into* God and there abiding so that he may flow out through us. Finally—

‘ The hermit is simply a pioneer . . . in the way of the desert which the whole of humanity must follow of necessity one day, each one according to his measure and desire. This eremitical vocation, at least embryonically, is to be found in every christian vocation but in some it must be allowed to come to its full flowering in the wind of the Spirit. It is not enough to affirm that the thing is good in itself, it is necessary that the Church and Society do something, so that this life may be realisable, so that each may at least touch it, be it only with the tip of his little finger ’. (Père Raphael Vernay O.S.B., *On the Desert Place of the Inner Sanctuary*).

FAIRACRES, OXFORD.

MARY CLARE S.L.G.

Worry

Our Lord cannot endure that any who love him should be worried, for fear is painful. Thus Saint John says, ‘ Love casteth out fear ’. Love cannot put up with either fear or pain, and so, to grow in love is to diminish in fear, and when one has become a perfect lover, fear has gone out of him altogether.

MEISTER ECKHART.

I Know Not How

Caught within
I know not how ;
This awful space,
This fiery flux
Of sharp-edged meanings ;
Words cut, crushed,
Charged and discharged
By the scarlet lance.
Till suddenly without warning
Borne away softly sighing—
I know not how.

I know not how
The minutes roll
From joy to melancholy,
And back again.
How the warm wax melts,
How the rope is tied
Until I look into His face and see
The Love He has for me—
I know not how.

7 January, 1977.

LEO PAUL S.S.F.,
Novice.

Books Received

The Reviews Editor gratefully acknowledges the receipt of the following recent publications, and it is hoped that a review will be published in a future edition.

Mystery and Imagination, by R. P. C. Hanson, S.P.C.K. ; **Mary and the Christian Gospel**, by J. de Satge, S.P.C.K. ; **Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future**, by M. Reeves, S.P.C.K. ; **Paul and Jesus**, by F. F. Bruce, S.P.C.K. ; **Praying the Psalms**, by L. E. Stradling, S.P.C.K. ; **One Man's Prayers**, by G. Appleton, S.P.C.K. ; **Charism and Sacrament**, by D. L. Gelpi, S.P.C.K. ; **Truth and Authority**, by Chadwick and Yarnold, S.P.C.K. ; **The Paradox of Worship**, by M. Perry, S.P.C.K. ; **Rudolph Bultmann's Theology**, by R. C. Roberts, S.P.C.K. ; **Free Fall**, by J. A. K. Smith, S.P.C.K. ; **Introduction to Theology**, by T. W. Jennings Jr., S.P.C.K. ; **The Good Shepherd**, by L. Newbigin, Faith Press ; **The Mystical Journey**, by E. Baker, Wildwood House ; **Prayer and Contemplation**, by M. Gibbard, Mowbray ; **On Peace**, by T. Merton, Mowbray ; **Meditations on Liturgy**, by T. Merton, Mowbray ; **Call to Action**, by M. Wright, Mowbray ; **His Life is Mine**, by Archimandrite Sophrony, Mowbray ; **Ethics of Freedom**, by J. Ellul, Mowbray ; **The Calvary Christ**, by G. O'Collins, S.C.M. ; **The Singer**, Falcon ; **Jonathans Dream**, Falcon ; **The Wisdom of the Early Bhuddhists**, by G. Parrinder, Sheldon Press ; **An Introduction to Mysticism**, by M. Smith, Sheldon Press ; **C. S. Lewis—The Shape of His Faith and Thought**, by P. L. Homer, Sheldon Press ; **Becoming What I Am**, by H. A. Williams, D.L.T. ; **Contemplative Intimacy**, by H. Slade S.S.J.E., D.L.T. ; **Ways of the Spirit**, by E. Hamilton, D.L.T.

Books

The Real Francis

We were with S. Francis. *Translated by Father Salvatore Butler O.F.M.*
Franciscan Herald Press, 1976, £2.00. Obtainable from Father James B. Hurley,
6 Russell Hill, Purley, CR2 2JA. £2.50 post free.

This new translation bears a bold title 'We were with S. Francis'. 'It is a set of rambling stories, artlessly written up, but recorded by men who had shared the daily life of this great saint'.

Most of these stories have appeared before in other translations and whilst these have been of a high calibre, they could only be found in large and expensive editions. Father Salvatore has placed these stories in a different order to that of other translators. In his comments on the text, he states I have 'given prior attention to stating accurately what these men intended to tell rather than reproducing in English the words they used to tell it. For the sake of smooth reading, I have straightened out some tangled sentences, and in rare instances have recast a paragraph when the sequence was clearly jumbled'.

'From the practical point of view, one can begin or finish his reading at one point as well as in another'. Thus making it ideal for reading at meals and in the offices; for meditation; for corporate sharing; for the putting together of homilies. A most practical asset of the book is the 'topical index'—a guide to key themes of the narrative.

Of equal value is that the index underlies the words and actions of each story—it is useful as an index to persons and places—and also acts as an immediate guide to the personality of the saint.

This report on the *real* Francis, by those who were with him, to the then Minister General of Friars Minor is more readable than other English translations, more informal, down to earth, simple and very Franciscan in vocabulary and spirit. This is because Father Salvatore has kept very faithfully to the style and spirit of the original, through the delicate insights into the truth and meaning of those closest to the saint, who wrote the report.

This is a labour of love, written from a heartfelt desire that the *real* S. Francis should be known and available to a wider group of persons. Especially those who have an affectionate interest in S. Francis and who may be looking to him for inspirational guidance within their own lives. We can only be grateful to Father Salvatore and his publisher for giving us this readable and very practical, powerful Francis-in-action gospel without compromise.

NOVICE BROTHER S.S.F.

Marxists and Christians

A Marxist Looks at Jesus. *By Milan Machovec.* D.L.T., 1976, £2.95.

Peter Hebblethwaite, in his helpful introduction to this book, states. 'A Marxist Looks at Jesus, then, has immense symbolic importance. It can stimulate and challenge Christians, and open the eyes of Marxists. It is a minor but indispensable Marxist classic which

will replace *Kautsky* as a study of Jesus. It is a memorial and a tribute to the debates of the 1960's, but also a pledge of hope for the future'.

It is always good to get the view of the outsider who is prepared to wrestle objectively with the truth of another's

belief and we must thank God that such a deeply Christian (if not profound) book has come from a professor of philosophy in Prague ; who remains a Marxist and who shows us how to write about another's faith without the usual denigration given to most Marxist thought and opinions.

His own approach seeks always to understand Jesus dynamically in relation to the historical period in which he originally lived, and this leads him to a conceptual view of Jesus the Messiah for example—which to my mind is more authentically biblical than many discussions one has either read or heard on this subject.

The message of Jesus on *Metanoia* comes over loud and clear, 'The real question of today is not whether some-

one takes the name of Jesus on his lips, especially in a traditional church religious way, but whether he lives out the principles of the Good Samaritan that Jesus has put before us'.

He reminds us that 'critics hardly ever blamed Christians for being disciples of Jesus, but rather reproached them with not being truly his disciples, with betraying his cause'.

There is no doubt in my mind that this book deserves to be read and digested by all thinking Christians who are prepared to be truly Christ-like. Loving by the faith that demands the objective judging of oneself by uncompromising standards, whilst dealing gently with others and by not being prepared to compromise the Gospel of Jesus.

NOVICE BROTHER S.S.F.

God's Delight

A Staircase for Silence. By Alan Ecclestone.

Darton, Longman and Todd, 152 pp., £2.00.

The prize-winning author of *Yes to God* has come up with another book full of rich insights, using the life and work of French writer Charles Péguy as a launching-pad from which to explore today's spiritual needs and how they can be met.

Running through the book is a deep awareness of the needs of our world and how those who pray must be attentive to them. (Echoes of Merton here). Ecclestone says that Péguy can help us pray 'in and for our world precisely because he compels us to look from the outside in, to listen to what for most of us is an unfamiliar speech and to translate it for ourselves'. The heart of the book's message is the need to create a new spirituality that can match the vastness and complexity of the modern world ; it would need deep roots in everyday life.

Péguy felt that it was 'the immensely complicated structure of human enterprise, mines and forests, workshops and markets in and through which the world's economy and man's redemption were carried out and the two were not to be forced apart'. Péguy was blessed with a joyous awareness of God's delight in the world he had made, a gift that Ecclestone sees as essential for a living spirituality, since estrangement from nature 'must mean to an ever-increasing extent the loss of a power to respond, to delight in, to wonder. It must dry up the springs of worship'.

Sombre words when one considers the grey lives led by so many immured in our grey cities, and the parlous plight of the inner-city church. Ecclestone would have parishes turn from decaying to praying, and in his fourth chapter sketches a thought-provoking picture of

what a praying parish could and should be.

He adds : ' Scattered among the people in our fragmented churches today there are those who hunger for something other than that they see, who are in pain because the church they belong to seems hopelessly stuck fast in a way of life that by no stretch of the imagination can be described in terms of leaven or salt or light . . . They know that the fellowship talked of does not take hold in a workmanlike way of the intricate fabric of human affairs nor confront the world in any decisive fashion '. A little further on, in words the Church of England could well take to heart, Ecclestone says that in Péguy's judgement France's *curés* lost the parishes because they imposed a dead

language on their people, ' excluding from the sphere of religious devotion those things that were realities of their working lives, disparaging as profane what did not conform to their patterns of piety, thwarting the growth of a common speech that embraced their experience of life with gestures of Christian faith '.

This is a fruitful book, even for those with no first-hand acquaintance of Péguy. That said, I would add that not even Ecclestone's enthusiasm could convince me of the value of Péguy's cloying certainty that France was the apple of God's eye. Nevertheless—dare we hope that Father Ecclestone has another book up his sleeve ?

TERRY CYPRIAN S.S.F.,
Novice.

Looking for the Eternal

In Search of the Beyond. *By Carlo Carretto.*
Darton, Longman and Todd, £1.35.

Many books may help us to understand something of the nature of God, to learn to pray and to follow Christ, but very few make us *desire* to love God, *long* to pray and *eager* to set out on the road of discipleship ; yet this is what Carlo Carretto's latest book does.

It is a book about contemplation, about man's restless longing for the Eternal which leads us on beyond gazing at the delicate grandeur of the universe to the breath-taking gulf which separates us from God, a gulf which is only bridged by God's love for us in Jesus. Contemplation is the way of surrender to the love of God.

But this is shown to be not just a practice for the 'specialist', for the enclosed religious and for those who have time, rather it is an essential part of the life of every Christian ; contemplation of the eternal and involve-

ment in the concerns of the world can and ought to go hand in hand. Nor is Brother Carlo talking merely of a technique of prayer, for the life of contemplation has to be lived out among ones fellow men in the daily living of the beatitudes. Above all contemplation means becoming small : small before God in creation and in history, small before God in Jesus, and small before God in mankind ; it demands a real poverty.

This is the sort of book one wants to re-read several times, not because it is hard to understand but in order to remember passages and phrases, for it is written in a poetic style which shows a certain gentleness towards the world and the human race, together with a real love for the Bible.

SAMUEL S.S.F.,
Novice.

Mystery of Faith

Source of Life : The Eucharist and Christian Living.

By René Voillaume. Darton, Longman and Todd, 58 pp., 80p.

This slight volume contains a series of talks given to an ecumenical group at Taizé. The whole is infused with that special devotion to Christ in the Eucharist which is the essential spirituality of the Little Brothers and Little Sisters who are walking in the way of Charles de Foucauld.

Father Voillaume cannot avoid being partisan in his theology, but his rejection of traditional Protestant eucharistic theology is at least kind. We note his rather self-conscious attempts to introduce Pope Paul's eucharistic thought into the discussion; in modern ecumenical dialogue the attempt of Catholic ecumenists to prove that the Pope is not an embarrassment is itself embarrassing.

In a positive and helpful line of thought, Father Voillaume suggests that the Eucharistic debate was caused by theologians trying to be too clever. He expounds the Eucharist as a mystery of faith, and 'the greatest mysteries lie in the simplest things'. The Eucharist is rooted in Creation, Incarnation and in the faith of the recipient.

The highlight of this little book is the appeal for the silent contemplation of the mystery of the Eucharist which should go on outside the Mass itself: 'Meditation on such a great mystery needs silence and a long time spent in prayer . . . Some kinds of grace God gives only in silence and solitary conversation with him'.

ESPERANCE, W. AUSTRALIA.

JOHN WATSON.

Duty to Animals

Animal Rights. *By Andrew Linzey.* S.C.M. Press, 120 pp., £3.25.

This is a well thought out and clear exposition on the rights of animals with a full consideration of the theological implications of the subject. It should be read by all Christians. The author begins by stating the problem, which he links with the present-day concern for ecology and a realisation of how man has mis-used his environment so that there is widespread pollution, over-population and waste of natural resources. The problem is stated in blunt and urgent terms: 'If Western civilisation is to survive, it must in important respects change its ways'. The only point at issue is just how fundamental these changes need to be.

This book is to be welcomed because for the first time it insists on the moral issue of man's refusal to accept that animals have rights. Man does not

regard his dealings with animals as an ethical problem. There is close reasoning given and it is very valuable in throwing light on the subject. In his second chapter the author goes on to state some theological propositions. Theologians have for a long time taken the view that animals have no immortal souls, therefore they have no rights. It follows from this view that man has no responsibilities towards them. There is a useful discussion about the meaning of 'dominion' as it appears in the priestly account of Genesis I. Then God said 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth'.

Either man's needs and welfare should have absolute priority in our moral

thinking or we should emphasise responsibilities to man *and* responsibilities to creation together. The author gives three reasons why he believes the latter view to be more acceptable to moral theology as a whole.

The author then goes on to discuss philosophical questions. Do we have any moral duties to animals? Or have we merely duties in respect of them in relation to their use or value placed upon them by human beings? Cardinal Heenan is quoted as saying 'They (the animals) are not human persons and therefore have no rights, so to speak in their own right. But they have very positive rights because they are God's creatures. If we have to speak with absolute accuracy we must say that God has the right to have all His creatures treated with proper respect'.

The author asks does one need to be a moral person before rights can legitimately be accorded to you? He concludes that we have a choice. Either

we continue to talk of a general responsibility for nature, continue to understand moral rights exclusively as the property of human beings, or we widen our perspective to include the rights of non-humans which possess the capacity for consciousness and sentience.

Space does not permit me to deal in detail with the second half of the book, but in the next three chapters the author indicates the ways in which we may talk of specific animal rights in relation to what we now do to them. The last chapter deals with theological reflections.

There are useful appendices: (a) Church and Conference Resolutions on Animal Welfare. (b) R.S.P.C.A. Records for One Speciman Month (June, 1974). (c) Animal Experimentation. There is also an excellent bibliography. This is a book that has long been needed. All Christians should feel very grateful to Andrew Linzey.

HUBERT S.S.F.

Mysticism and Theology

In the Image and Likeness of God. By Vladimir Lossky.

Mowbrays, 232 pp., £2.50, paperback.

In almost any book published posthumously, the presence of the author in his words is intense and real. Perhaps this is because we know we will hear no more from him.

Even in translation, the tremendous gift of love and light that Vladimir Lossky has given to the people of God is no less characteristic in this collection, recently published.

In his introduction, Canon A. M. Allchin quotes Lossky to describe Lossky: 'To be a theologian is to adopt an attitude which utterly excludes all abstract or purely intellectual theological which would adapt the mysteries of the wisdom of God to human ways of thought . . . To know

God one must draw near to him. No one who does not follow the path of union with God can be a theologian'.

This book is intensely theological. But it also has the feel of being intensely personal. In reading it, I found his earlier essay, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* a handy and helpful refresher. Most useful is the chapter on S. Gregory Palamas and the theology of light. An archbishop monk and theologian almost unknown in the West until recently, Palamas reveals by his descriptions a deep experience of prayer. Particularly his expositions concerning the light of the transfiguration of Christ stand out as expressing in gentle grace-filled terms what can only be fully

understood in silence. In the West we are used to neat dogmatic formulae. For that S. Gregory Palamas cannot opt, and hence if we let ourselves be led deeper, we come to understand what the Christian East means by theology—the

unitive experience of the Church at prayer, as it seeks deification in Christ. We can, with Lossky, come to see doctrinal issues not as vague or abstract talking points, but as expressions of Christian life. JOHN-BAPTIST S.S.F.

Prayer of Faith

Watch with the Sick. *Compiled by Norman Autton.* S.P.C.K., £1.95.

In our younger days, some of us, at our catechism classes, would have been instructed in the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, and fourth on the list is to visit the sick. We do this for many reasons, because of relations or friends, on humanitarian grounds, but Christians follow the precepts of Jesus (Matt. 25: 43). This book is most helpful and worth time to reflect on the prayers and portions of the word of God, more so as the book is compiled with a sense of great tenderness to patients and persons in need of our care and prayer. Norman Autton reminds his readers that in these days there is a closer relationship

between the medical profession and nursing staff, and hospital chaplains and visiting priests and ministers.

There are many books of prayer for the sick, but here we have one which spreads the golden mantle of prayer and care over the whole network of hospital administration from consultants and nursing staff to porters, ward orderlies, ambulance personnel and cooks, and most important, the patients.

As one who has the privilege of being a chaplain's assistant at our local hospitals, I can sincerely recommend this book.

NICHOLAS S.S.F.

Desert Calling

The Further Shore. *By Abhishiktananda.* I.S.P.C.K., Rs. 10.

This posthumous book contains two essays: *Sannyasa* and *The Upanishads*—an introduction. *Sannyasa* was completed in July, 1973, a few months before his death. In it he describes that 'call to the desert' which has its counterpart in other religions, but a particular totality in Hinduism. Ultimately it is a call to pass beyond all ties, not only earthly ties, but even those of religion, to a further shore where only the true self persists. Henri Le Saux, a Frenchman and a Catholic priest, sees it in the Christian tradition as best illustrated in the early desert fathers, but in a sense it lies at the heart of every true monastic vocation. The hermit lurks within even

the active religious, and sometimes causes him to become a hermit—simply 'being' is so much more truly the essence of life than even the least self-regarding 'doing'. Yet a man cannot safely respond to the call till he is ripe for it.

Here there is a paradox in the Hindu conception. From one angle *sannyasa* can be seen as the fourth stage of a man's life. 'Student' till twenty-five, he becomes a 'householder' and plays a part in the world till fifty, when he may withdraw to the 'forest', and study and meditate under guidance till the moment comes when he is ready for *sannyasa*, into which he can be initiated by his

guru in a ceremony in which he recites for the last time his *mantra*, offers his last sacrifice, plunges into a river and loosens his clothes to float away, is wrapped in the flame coloured saffron robe, and wanders away utterly free. On the other hand at any stage of life, and any occupation, he may be caught away into *sannyasa*, and in such a case any *diksha*, or ceremony, is meaningless, as he is already beyond all ties before he can be released from them. The Russian conception of *poustina* is similar to this. An ecumenical *diksha* was devised by Abhishiktananda with Christian equivalents, and administered by him not long before the end. He found it more than a symbol, truly a mystery.

Abhishiktananda would not have come to his knowledge, and indeed experience, of *sannyasa* had he not been

soaked in the *Upanishads*. His introduction, all too brief, is not the less value in that it warns us to go back beyond the centuries of commentary on them to the texts themselves. Even when the great Shankacharya himself is the commentator, there is a temptation to read back formulas into the originals, whereas the *Upanishads* are themselves a breaking free from the stranglehold the Brahmins put on the traditions of the Vedic hymns. Here is knowledge which cannot so much be taught as caught from *guru* to *shishya*. Kings as much as priests originate the *Upanishads*, which had their great period from the ninth to the sixth centuries B.C. and contain the philosophic roots to Hindu thought. Abhishiktananda will show you how to approach them, with a useful explanation of their basic concepts.

W. LASH.

Russian Spirituality

Staretz Amvrosy. *By John Dunlop.*

Mowbrays, 1975, paperback, 176 pp., £1.75.

This is a study and interpretation of the life of one of the greatest of the Russian *staritsy* (spiritual fathers) of the nineteenth century, Father Amvrosy. It is a very important book, for those interested in Christian spirituality, from several points of view.

The *staretz* is of the line of Optina Pustyn Monastery which was one of the most influential and well-known dynasties of Russian spiritual fathers. It was here that Count Leo Tolstoy made pilgrimages and Fyodor Dostoevski derived his character 'Father Zossima', so well known to Western readers in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

In his study John Dunlop makes available to us abundant material about Father Amvrosy, in the forms of letters, descriptions, recollections, that

hitherto has been almost entirely untranslated into our language. The advent of fervent interest in Orthodox spirituality is greatly enhanced by this issue of fresh primary and secondary source material surrounding this great man of God. Unfortunately, at least in this context, Mr. Dunlop seems to have little sense of humour—for many of the pithy and humorous sayings and actions of Father Amvrosy are given a pious commentary faintly reminiscent of early biographies of the Little Flower! But in spite of this, the *staretz* does speak for himself particularly in the extracts on healing.

The appendices (one on Amvrosy as monastic spiritual director, and one on his ascetic and hesychastic teaching) are very useful, specially to the 'not-quite-beginner' interested in spiritual growth

along these lines.

Staretz Amvrosy is a solid and sensible man, filled with grace and imbued with a loving compassionate heart that obviously longs for the reconciliation of his fellow men and women with the divine economy. The introduction by Sir John Lawrence aptly points to the fact that, next the ecclesiastical hierarchy did the truly charismatic ministry of the *staritsy* take hold in post-Petrine Russian church life.

These men are of extraordinary spiritual discernment. Such ministry in outward expression is not possible in the Soviet Union today though there is ample evidence to suggest the same quality and values still exist: 'recent letters of spiritual counsel circulate in typescript . . . and . . . are very like the letters written by the *staretz* of the nineteenth century in their traditional wisdom and loving attention to each person's life'.

JOHN-BAPTIST S.S.F.

Georgian Saints

Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints.

By David Marshall Lang. Mowbrays, 1976, £2.50, paperback.

For anyone familiar with Butler's or Baring-Gould's *Lives of the Saints* or even the Penguin *Book of Saints*, this treasury of Georgian Saints will make a truly lovely companion. For anyone interested in history, either of the Church in Asia or the cultural past, the venerable bards of the Georgian Christian tradition will without doubt hold that persons interest.

The sober introduction tells of the much diminished state of the Church of Georgia and one feels right the way through the book, that the independence of these people, like the Armenians, is dearly won, dearly kept intact under centuries of difficult circumstances, and hence clearly cherished.

For Franciscan readers, the life of S. David of Garesja, lends delight: 'Father David said "Brother Lucian take a dish and milk these deer". And he got up and milked them. When the dish was full he took it up to the hermit. And he made the sign of the cross and it turned into curds, and they (the deer) ate and were well filled'.

Among the other saints were several children, a cobbler, and a perfumer from Baghdad. A truly Asian collection, and a wonderful introduction to one of the most venerable parts of the Eastern autocephalous Orthodox Churches, one whose life under Soviet rule truly needs our prayers.

JOHN-BAPTIST S.S.F.

God With Us

Cancer and the God of Love. By Melvyn Thompson. S.C.M. Press, 1976, 90p.

Melvyn Thompson, as Chaplain to the Royal Marsdon Hospital, has done a great service in writing this book. It can be read by all concerned, the medical-nursing team, and more especially by the patient, his or her family, and friends. The fear and mystique of cancer is lessened, as he describes clearly the

thoughts and reactions of patients and their relatives who are confronted not only with the disease, but with the medical institution. It is a thought-provoking book for the hospital chaplain and for Christians who are working in all spheres of suffering. He clearly brings us to a greater awareness of the

fact that God is present in every situation, behind every face and in all suffering. A God of Love is always with us. For me the most important contribution is the fact that the person of the patient comes to the fore, thus forcing us to understand and also allow for creative companionships between all concerned. The person of the patient is involved in his or her treatments.

Crucial to the whole situation is a belief in God. 'To believe in a God of love is to disclose that love is at the heart of true human living, and should be the ultimate motivation for all human

activity'. Amen.

Crucial to the whole argument is the way in which the patient symbolises what is happening to him and the fact that this can only be countered rationally by other symbols. This leads into a deeper discussion of religious symbols, the place of suffering and its relation to a loving God.

Although this is a very useful book, I would ask how does one present the symbolism of God to atheists—perhaps it is presented through a love of shared caring.

NOVICE BROTHER S.S.F.

In Unquietness

Prayers for Impossible Days. By Paul Geres. S.P.C.K., 1976, 95p.

A short book of prayers genuinely worthy to be set alongside that of Michel Quoist's 'Prayers of Life'.

These are prayers for the settling of the unquietness in our lives. For those times when we are sick of God, the Church and people. These prayers are written to take the frustrations of everyday life and to use them creatively in our developing of a deeper and more personal relationship with God and with each other. They come from the life pen of a French priest, who like M. Quoist, has a parish in one of France's industrial cities. He is a man who is

sensitive to his people's needs and that the *true purpose of prayer is the realising of union with God, come what may*. They are prayers of liberation lived out in the agony of impossible days, that we might live all the closer to God and each other. They can also act as a guide towards the making of our own prayers, suitable to our particular situations and the needs of others.

His prayers are grounded in the prayer of Our Father. 'And when none of these prayers has been of any comfort to you, then you shall say : Our Father . . . Amen'. NOVICE BROTHER S.S.F.

Meditations

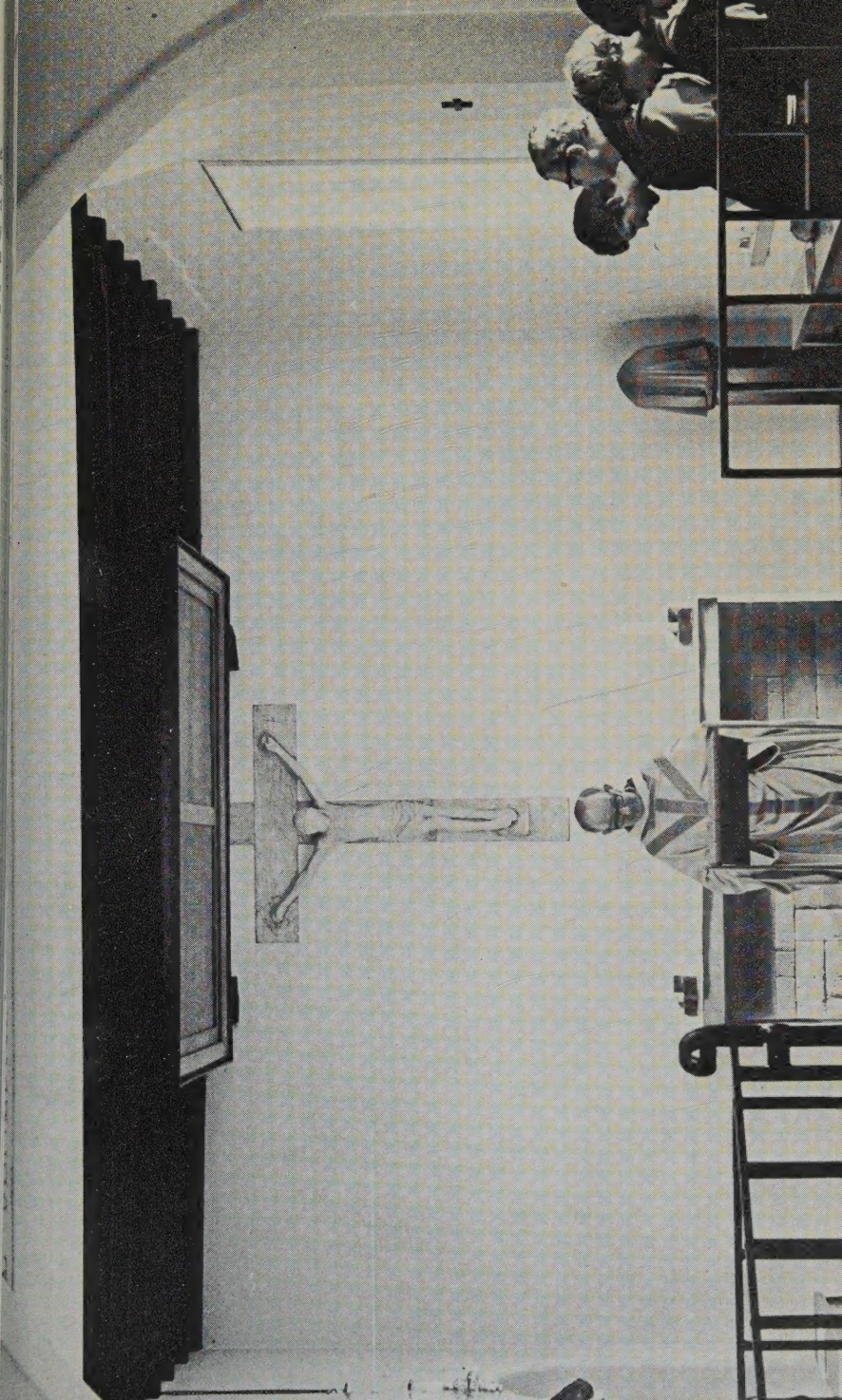
The Word is the Seed. By G. Appleton. S.P.C.K., 1976, £1.25.

This small book of meditations is helpful. The Bible is their starting point as it springs to life in these prayerful meditations. For those 'Willing to pray, the mind awaits on the edge of a sliding stream. The prayers push the boat off, out into the current. Once in the stream, the prayer is effortless

compulsion carrying the mind along and sometimes swerving close to the Presence of the Creator'.

This book of prayers is a proto-type for the many we could create as we pray God's message as it comes to us through meditation.

NOVICE BROTHER S.S.F.



Eucharist at Glasshampton